A LIGHT FOR THE EVENING OF THE WORLD

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We, the undersigned, hereby certify that we have read and recommend to the General Faculty Council for acceptance, a thesis entitled A LIGHT FOR THE EVENING OF THE WORLD, submitted by Robert Frederick Smith,B.A., in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Bachelor of Divinity.

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INTRODUCTION

A nation tottered on the brink of anarchy. Its great masses were oppressed, its aristocracy pampered, man's intellect was king, moral and spiritual decay were rife. Then, into this seemingly hopeless situation came a decisively transforming influence, a dynamic religious awakening, predicated upon the universal brotherhood of all men and the universal availability of salvation from sin through the prevenient grace of God in Jesus Christ. And John Wesley, through the Evangelical Revival to which his life was devoted, saved England from bloody revolution and ushered in a new social order.

Not only England but the world today needs such an all-pervading, transforming experience. For the problems of a pre-Industrial Revolution England have now been magnified to a global scale. The populations of Asia, Africa and South America live in poverty and bondage. The fortunate third of the world's population in Western Europe and North America lives in unparalleled ease and self-indulgence; man's intellectual attainments, especially in the field of science, are regarded as the summit of man's endeavour; moral and spiritual decay are prevalent. And the world totters on the brink of, not anarchy, but Armageddon.

We in the United Church of Canada stand in the direct line of succession from the men and women who, by the power of the Spirit, were used to transform and redeem England. And it is essential, if the United Church of Canada is to be an instrument of God, for us to learn

well the lessons of the past. It was Santayana who said, "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it".

It is our purpose, in this study, to examine the state of England in the eighteenth century and the state of the Church there. We shall then attempt to determine the nature of the dynamic of the Evangelical Revival through a study of its theological emphases and its practical methods.

From England in the eighteenth century we shall turn to Canada in the twentieth century, examining in turn the state of the nation and the state of the United Church of Canada and drawing certain parallels between the nation and the Church of Wesley and the nation and the Church of today. With this background we shall then attempt to re-interpret and re-apply the legacy of Methodism to our contemporary situation.

PART ONE

THE DYNAMIC OF THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL

CHAPTER I

ENGLAND AT THE BEGINNING OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

A quotation from the introduction to the Proposal for a National Reformation of Manners, published in 1694, sets the stage for this brief survey. "Our light", it states, "looks like the evening of the world."[1]

As the eighteenth century dawned over England, anything more than a superficial examination of her condition would seem to verify this melancholy observation. For a century and a half she had been embroiled in ceaseless controversy;[2] controversy, it is true, which had brought her to a position of political, military and commercial eminence, but which had cost her dearly in terms of moral and spiritual values. England was well-nigh exhausted, and this prevailing exhaustion demanded a period of relaxation from the tensions with which she had lived for so long.

Perhaps the longest shadows from the "light which looked like the evening of the world" were cast by the philosophical temper of the age. This was the Age of Reason which was characterized by two tendencies: the primacy of reason and the revolt against authority. People were no longer willing to accept institutions or philosophies merely from the authority of tradition or sacredness or power. Dr. Gerald R. Cragg, in his book The Church and the Age of Reason says, "The eighteenth century began its course with a confident assurance that

reason can resolve all mysteries into simple logic and can dispell the last shadows of darkness and superstition."[3] And again, "The new science of Newton and Locke disposed men to regard the universe as an orderly system, guided by a purpose in which men can participate, and governed by laws which human intelligence can grasp. The new philosophy had opened the way to a deeper understanding of human nature and particularly to a new appreciation of the workings of the human mind."[4] This exaltation of Reason led, quite naturally, to a de-emphasis and ultimately to a denial of the place of religion, and to a corresponding decline in morality.

The Deists, who appealed to reason, found its laws supremely manifested in nature. They taught that Creation is perfect and that Creation perfectly reveals Divine Providence, thereby rendering supernatural revelation unnecessary. Nothing was accepted or believed that could not be proven first to be consistent with the dictates of reason. They increasingly questioned the validity of revelation and ended up questioning the historical proof of the genuineness of the Christian records. Because Rationalism, and more specifically, Deism, were negative rather than positive, destructive rather than constructive, a great void was left in the lives of the English intellectuals who, having been deprived of their religious faith, rapidly degenerated to the point where, as Nicolson remarks, "England was characterized in the first half of the eighteenth century by self-satisfaction and unimaginative complacency".[5] To quote another source, "The high standard of morality which had characterized Puritan England had been toned down. What appeared reasonable was regarded as right, and thus expediency and the gratification of one's desires tended to dictate the line of conduct to be pursued."[6]

This philosophical temper of the age had considerable influence upon the maintenance of rigid class distinctions. Between the pampered minority who comprised the aristocracy and the vast majority of "the poor" stood insurmountable barriers. These rigid class distinctions were held to be divinely ordained. As a result of the rapid industrialization then taking place, new communities of factory-workers and miners sprang up overnight, the inhabitants of which suffered under unimaginable conditions. They had been uprooted from their peaceful, simple, rustic village life and abruptly dumped into a rootless, drifting, lonely society of strangers, with all the unleashed problems attendant.[7] As Trevelyan remarks, "Britain in the eighteenth century was ruled by a landed gentry. This land-owning oligarchy encircled and enchained the throne, dominated the House of Lords, and possessed enormous influence in the House of Commons."[8] And the landed gentry made every effort to perpetuate these class distinctions. For example, they promoted the reading of an anonymously-written handbook on social conduct and duty entitled The Whole Duty of Man which read, in part,

> Therefore, as titular dignities entitle men to outward respect and observance, so also does wealth and large possessions; for when God bestows on one man a larger fortune and possession than on another, he does thereby prefer and advance him to a higher sphere and condition; and when God hath set him above us, it is just and fit that we should rise and give that place to him which is God's appointment. [9]

A quotation from Hannah More's Will Chip's True Rights of Man serves further to clarify this attitude,

> That some must be poorer this truth I will sing
> Is the law of my Maker and not of my King,
> And the true rights of Man, and the life of his Cause
> Are not equal possessions, but equal just laws. [10]

This justification of social stratification on the basis of it being the

will of God accomplished, for the time being, its purpose, but it also resulted, in the apt words of J.W. Bready, in the "degrading of Providence into a Chief of Police, utilizing the National clergy as his special constabulary to keep the populace in their appointed stations."[11] A similar imposition of artificial class distinctions was to result in the eruption, in France, of bloody revolution, and already in England the seeds of such discontent had been sown.

Meanwhile, however, England continued to prosper. Her philosophical bias seemed to have no effect on her commercial successes. She was a world power on land and sea. With the exception of the great South Seas Bubble she was commercially stable and successful. Hallam's Constitutional History speaks of the thirty-year period following the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) as "the most prosperous season that England ever experienced".[12] Dr. Cragg remarks,

> [England's] predominant interests were commercial; its most serious crisis was caused by speculation in stocks; its main disputes concerned currency and excise; its chief victories were the conquest of new markets. Its rulers were opportunists, adept at manipulation and intrigue, and with standards usually adaptable and often low. [13]

With the discovery and capture of new markets, industry thrived. The benefits of this industrial expansion, however, were directed almost entirely to the middle class and the aristocracy, while the masses of the people shared only the attendant disadvantages.

The credit for England's commercial successes undoubtedly belongs to the great political figures who dominated Parliament. The eighteenth century, as Maldwyn Edwards remarks, was "the century of Benevolent Despotism. It boasted its great potters who moulded the clay of the peoples to their own liking."[14] But the "great potters" moulded their clay not

by principle but by expediency. Perhaps never before or since have politicians been so cynical in the performance of their task. Parliament was but partially representative. Two-thirds of the House of Commons was nominated by the great land-owners. "Some venal boroughs, like Old Sarum, 'without house or inhabitants', sent two members to Parliament, while large centres of the growing industrial population, such as Manchester, had no members at all."[15] Politics were corrupt - everyone had his price. It was Lecky who wrote of Sir Robert Walpole,

> It was his settled policy to maintain his Parliamentary majority, not by attracting to his ministry great orators, great writers, great financiers or great statesmen, not by effecting any combination or coalition of parties, or by identifying himself with any great object of popular desire, or by winning to his side young men in whose character and ability he could trace the promise of future eminence, but simply by engrossing borough influence and extending the patronage of the crown. [16]

In the midst of such surroundings, it is interesting to note the development of our system of cabinet government and the emergence of the office of Prime Minister.[17]

On every facet of English life in the opening years of the eighteenth century the spirit of rationalism took its toll. J.W. Bready remarks, "The curse of 18th century intellectualism was not its common sense but its lack of anything more dynamic. Sincerity was at a discount; superficial brilliance at a premium. Moral expediency ruled the souls of men."[18] The resultant degeneracy began at the level of the Crown and, filtering downward through the aristocracy to the middle class and then the masses, pervaded the whole.

> The deification of the Restoration of Charles II's kingship tended directly to idealize the fickle, dashing, voluptuous and godless way of life "the Gay Monarch" flaunted before the nation. That sovereign's libertinism in fact established or confirmed the fashionable social criteria of the young

> "squirearchy", while a studied, persistent, revengeful abhorrence of "the Saints" and all their Puritan hypocrisy tended to put virtue and sobriety, faith and reform to rout. 19

For a more graphic description of the state of affairs at court, we might turn to Thackeray, who, in portraying the Court of George II says,

> No wonder the clergy were corrupt and indifferent amidst this indifference and corruption. No wonder that the skeptics multiplied and morals degenerated so far as they depended upon the influence of such a King ... the Queen's chaplains, mumbling through their morning office in the ante-room, under the picture of the great Venus, with the door opened into the adjoining chamber, where the Queen is dressing, talking scandal . . . or uttering sneers . . . I say I am scared as I look around at this society - at this King, at these courtiers, at these politicians, at these bishops, at this flaunting vice and levity. Whereabouts in this court is the honest man? Where is the pure person one may like? The air stifles one with its sickly perfumes. 20

There seems little doubt that, in the words of Bready, "the fact of a phenomenal social and moral degeneracy at this period is indisputable."[21] Trevelyan says that "in England the first half of the eighteenth century was a period of moral disorder. The politicians were corrupt, the ecclesiastics lax, the middle classes intent only on making money and the masses of the people licentious, drunken and raw."[22] He goes on to say,

> The period of Walpole and the Pitts was the heyday of unchallenged abuses in all forms of corporate life. Holders of ecclesiastical, academic, charitable and scholastic endowments had no fear of enquiry or reform. Schoolmasters could draw their salaries without keeping school. Universities could sell their degrees without holding examinations or giving instruction. Parliamentary boroughs and municipal oligarchies could be as corrupt and ridiculous as they liked; it was enough that they were old. 23

Laxity in personal moral standards accompanied laxity in corporate moral standards. To have a mistress was to adhere to the norm; few of the humble folk bothered to legitimize their unions, or the offspring of such unions. Consumption of hard liquor, most notably of gin, reached

epic proportions. In some areas of London, more than a quarter of the buildings housed gin shops, some of them bearing such enticing advertisements as "Drunk for a penny; dead drunk for tuppence; free straw to lie upon." Trevelyan, in his Life of C.J. Fox tells us that "society was one vast casino. On whatever pretext and under whatever circumstances half a dozen people found themselves together, whether for music or dancing or politics or for drinking the waters or each other's wine, the box was sure to be rattling and the cards were being shuffled."[24] The masses entertained themselves with various cruel pastimes; bear-baiting, bull-fighting, cock-fighting - in some cases church bells were used to tell abroad the results of these "sporting events". The theatre was incredibly coarse and degraded.

In contrast, many of the more fortunate people took a great interest in landscape gardening and art collecting. And as proof that the grandeur and glory of man was not completely stifled, we need only to recall that it was within a similar society that Handel wrote and performed The Messiah.

A very revealing measure of the character of the age can be found in the methods of law enforcement and the treatment of offenders. On the one hand, law enforcement was unbelievably lax. The country was infested with highwaymen and footpads, the streets and parks were rendered unsafe by their activities. The constabulary were mostly old men, often in the pay of the gangsters. But woe to the man who was caught. Nicolson tells us that there were 253 offences for which capital punishment could be inflicted.[25] And M.B. Synge, in his Short History of Social Life in England describes the prisons as "the grave of the living, where they are shut up from the world, and the worms that gnaw upon them,

their own thoughts, the gaoler and their creditors."[26] Wesley, in his Journal, relates that "about eleven hundred of the French prisoners were confined in that little place, without anything to lie upon but a little dirty straw, or anything to cover them but a few foul thin rags, either by day or night, so that they died like rotten sheep."[27] Lecky describes a public execution thus,

> The executions of criminals return every six weeks regularly with the session. The criminals pass through the streets in carts, dressed in their best clothes, with white gloves and nosegays if it be the season. Those that die merrily or that don't at least show any fear of death are said to die like gentlemen and to merit that encomium most of them die like beasts, without any concern, or like fools, having no other view than to divert the crowd . . . The frequent executions, the great numbers that suffer together and the applauses of the crowd may contribute something to it, and the brandy which they swallow before setting out helps to stun them. 28

Other quaint methods of administering retributive justice included disembowelling, pressing, burning at the stake and transportation.

Obviously, then, human life was cheap, and nowhere is this more apparent than in descriptions of the treatment of children. We are told that three out of four children died before their fifth birthday. Foundlings more often than not were exposed, and the money for their support was used for drunken orgies by the persons entrusted with their care. "An English Church Warden, or 'father of the poor' may, within the Bills of Mortality, under sanction of his office, suffer children to be starved to death, or poisoned with noxious air."[29] Those children who did survive such awesome hazards more often than not were used as child labour in the mills and mines, working twelve hours a day seven days a week under indescribable conditions.

Such utter disregard for the sanctity of human life is hard to account for. Some historians hold that at least a part of the reason

lay in the slave trade, which Britain had dominated since the Treaty of Utrecht. Bready says, "The spirit of cupidity which it bred and fed, the cheapening of all human life which it engendered and the vulgarization of all labour which it implied, branded and cursed the economic, political and social life of the century."[30]

Undoubtedly the slave trade did have a demeaning and degrading influence and this, coupled with the cynicism and the expediency resultant from rationalism served to make the eighteenth century an "age of materialism, a period of dim ideals and expiring hopes." Truly, "the light looked like the evening of the world."

What of the Church and her influence in these melancholy and oppressive circumstances? It is to be a consideration of the Church that we now turn.

CHAPTER II

CONDITIONS IN THE CHURCH IN ENGLAND AS THE CENTURY OPENED

The majority of writers of the history of eighteenth century England would have us believe that nowhere did the light look more "like the evening of the world" than in the religious practices and institutions of the time. Into the Established Church, as well as into the Dissenting Churches, had crept a lassitude so complete as to be almost overwhelming. The clergy and laity alike concerned themselves with debating obscure details of philosophy and doctrine; there was an almost complete absence of social concern, with the dubious exception of a constant stream of pamphlets instructing the poor (i.e. the whole labouring class) that it was their high priviledge "cheerfully to perform their various duties in those stations of life in which it had pleased God to place them";[1] factionalism and internal strife were rampant as a result of constant jockeying for position in the hierarchy.

As a direct result of the obvious characteristics which have been listed, the prestige and power of the religious communities in England fell to an all-time low. "There was", says Green, "open revolt against religion and against churches in both extremes of English society. The poor were ignorant and brutal to a degree impossible now to realize; the rich, to an almost utter disbelief of religion, linked a foulness of life now happily almost inconceivable."[2] The clergy, in the eyes of the populace, were quarrelsome and intemperate men, and as a class, they were exposed to violent attacks. They were seen, quite rightly in many cases,

as the agents of vested interests, and their words and their posturings were all but totally disregarded.

A number of authorities can be cited to support these grim observations: Montesquieu, writing in 1728 said, "In England there is no religion, and the subject, if mentioned in society, evokes nothing but laughter."[3] And Carlyle, of the same period, said succinctly, "Soul extinct, stomach well alive."[4] From within the Church, Bishop Butler wrote, in the preface to his Analogy,

> It has somehow come to be taken for granted that Christianity is not so much a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious . . . Men treat it as if in the present age this were an agreed point amongst all people of discernment, and nothing remains but to set it up as a principle subject of mirth and ridicule. [5]

And Thomas Secker, subsequently Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote even more strongly, "Christianity is now railed at with very little reserve, and its teachings without any at all. Against us our adversaries appear to have set themselves to be as bitter as they can, not only beyond all truth but beyond all probability, exaggerating without mercy."[6]

Whether the spirit of rationalism in religion which prevailed at the beginning of the eighteenth century was the cause of the decay of religion, or merely its companion, is difficult to ascertain. It is certain that each of these tendencies fed upon the other. As the century began, there was a widespread movement to place the truths of Christianity in a light that would make them appealing to men of calm and dispassionate judgement. Because of the strife and controversy which had so dominated religion in the years immediately preceding, it is understandable that a certain attractiveness would attach itself to faith when it was presented calmly and reasonably.

This tendency, which so marked religion in England in the eighteenth century has been given the jaw-breaking title of Latitudinarianism. The precursor of the movement was one John Toland who, in 1696 published a discourse entitled Christianity not mysterious; or a discourse showing that there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to reason, nor above it, and that no Christian doctrine can properly be called a mystery.[7] The task which the Latitudinarians set for themselves was that of reconciling the church to the changes which a new intellectual climate demanded. Their attempt at this worthy objective was characterized by a total absence of emotion and mysticism. Reason, the great catchword, was the defence against unregulated inspiration. "They equated what was reasonable with what commended itself to common sense. Emotion was suspect, and enthusiasm was anathema."[8]

Positively, the Latitudinarians were characterized by a robust common sense; vigorous, though unimaginative learning, and a strong persuasion of the relevance of religion to their age.[9] Although they avoided like the plague all mysticism and dogmatism, they nevertheless were possessed with a strong ethical motivation, and often with fearlessness and daring they confronted an increasingly licentious age with the demands of morality. Most of their intellectual energies were directed towards refuting the claims of the Deists who, as has been noted above, went one step further than Latitudinarianism and held that natural religion is sufficient in itself, thereby repudiating all revealed religion. In the controversies which raged between these two groups the dominant characteristics were, of course, the urge to be rational, a scintillating wittiness, and superficial brilliance. The lengths to which they would go in their use of reason are perhaps exemplified in

one of the outstanding scholars of the age, one Bishop Warburton, who not infrequently justified the Deity "by proving, most rationally, that his conduct was conformable to the provisions of the British Constitution."[10] (Shades of British Israelitism!).

Again a positive note is struck by Dr. Gerald Cragg, who finds considerable good in the Hanoverian church,

> [Churchmanship] was not inspiring, but it was certainly not contemptible. In outlook it was neither mystical nor otherworldly. It set exaggerated store by moderation, and the qualities it esteemed most highly were temperance, restraint and reasonableness. It studiously ignored the claims of self-denial. It adapted itself too readily to the tastes of an age which exalted common sense and pursued material prosperity, yet it stoutly resisted the rampant immorality and the rationalist disbelief of a hard-bitten society. [11]

But there is another side to the story of the churches in eighteenth century England. Regardless of their aspirations to make Christianity relevant to the age in which they found themselves, they seem studiously to have pursued every course that could possibly make it irrelevant. Their concern was directed almost exclusively to the mental processes of the aristocracy; their religion related itself almost entirely to the mind, and almost not at all to the heart. It was a cold and sterile faith which they proclaimed. It was morality cut off from the roots which they taught. And worst of all, it was a belief which seemed to make few demands upon its proponents and even fewer on its adherents.

True, the polity of the Established Church made it all but impossible for the clergy to administer properly their parishes or dioceses. The members of the hierarchy of the church found much of their time taken up with the business of politics; the Bishops' Bench wielded much power in the House of Lords. And since appointments to the episcopacy were

in the form of political patronage, they had to be earned by loyalty to the party, and by a constant currying of the favour of those in power. Spiritual awareness and sensitivity were, more often than not, liabilities when one aspired to a position of power in the Church. In addition to the vast amount of time required of the bishops in their attendance at Parliament, they were required to continue in their political role when they returned to their dioceses. The church, in effect, through its ties with the state, became "an engine of political power," the ecclesiastical arm of the Whig party.[12]

The insidiousness of the patronage system of distributing ecclesiastical preferments is illustrated in the case of a certain Lady Yarmouth, a court favorite of George II who was instrumental in having a certain clergyman made a bishop because he had bet her £5000 that he would not be one[13]; and even more clearly in a letter from a church dignitary of the day named Middleton to Lord Harvey, in which the writer ridicules the Articles which he was about to sign in order to take possession of a living,

> Though there are many things in the Church which I wholly dislike, yet while I am content to acquiesce in the ills, I shall be glad to taste a little of the good, and so to have some amends for that ugly assent and consent which no man of sense will approve of. We read of some of the earliest disciples of Christ who followed Him, not for His works, but for His loaves . . . My appetite for each is equally moderate. I have no pretensions to riot at the feast of the elect, but with the sinner in the gospel to gather up the crumbs which fall from the table. [14]

A system such as this could not help but breed cynicism among aspirants, thereby degrading the whole. To complicate the intrigue, the various livings displayed wide disparity in monetary rewards. Some bishoprics carried stipends of £7000 per annum, while others brought with them as little as £550 per annum. A promising young aspirant was

started in a poor arrangement, and if he showed proper loyalty and devotion to his superiors, and possessed the necessary connections with those in high places, he could be assured of speedy advancement to a position of influence and affluence.

Because of the inequity of recompense, the practice of pluralism arose, whereby a clergyman could, at the same time, hold several livings, drawing full stipends from all, and employing curates, often at starvation wages, to tend the various flocks. The abuses to which this practice led are easy to reconstruct. The various parishes were ineptly cared for, the face of the incumbent was rarely seen, and the state of religion degenerated correspondingly.

Because of the weight of political duties, as well as because of immense difficulties of communication and transportation, the oversight of the bishops was, at best, inadequate. Candidates for ordination were poorly screened, and following ordination they went their way blissfully free from supervision. As a result of such conditions, the feasts of the Church were ignored, daily services abandoned, buildings were allowed to fall into disrepair, and Holy Communion became infrequent. Preaching degenerated to the point where Fitchett could remark, "The essence of preaching was 'Don't be drunk, or you will ruin your health; nor commit murder, or you will be hanged. Every man should be happy, and the way to be happy is to be thoroughly respectable.'"[15]

As might be expected from the foregoing remarks, there was considerable immorality and debauchery among the clergy themselves. The priest was characterized and satirized as a hard-drinking, high-living very antithesis of what he proclaimed. Witness George Crabbe's lines,

> The reverend wig, in sideway order placed,
> The reverend band, by rubric stains disgraced,
> The leering eye, in wayward circles rolled
> Mark him the pastor of a jovial fold
> Whose various texts excite a loud applause
> Favouring the bottle or the good old cause. 16

Indeed, the parish priest might be forgiven such antics, since he was constantly provided with examples of similar behaviour by the highest officials of his Church. At one point things reached such a pretty pass that George III was compelled to address himself to Lord Cornwallis, Primate of England, in this wise,

> MY GOOD LORD PRELATE,
>
> I would not delay giving you notification of the grief and concern with which my breast was affected at receiving authentic information that routs had made their way into your palace. At the same time I must signify to you my sentiments on the subject, which hold these levities and vain dissipations as utterly inexpedient, if not unlawful, to pass in a residence for many years devoted to divine studies, religious retirement and the extensive exercise of charity and benevolence . . . From the dissatisfaction with which you must perceive I behold these improprieties - not to speak in harder terms - and on still more pious principles, I trust you will suppress them immediately, so that I may not have occasion to show any further marks of my displeasure, or to interfere in a different manner. May God take your Grace into his Almighty protection.
>
> I remain, my Lord Primate,
> Your gracious friend,
> "G.R." 17

But the greatest judgement against the Established Church is not her immorality, obvious though that, at times, may be; nor is it her position as an arm of a political power; nor yet the spirit of rationalism which pervaded her every cell. To our mind the greatest judgement against the Established Church is to be found in her unconscionable neglect of her responsibility to the new industrial communities, the mill-towns and the mining centres, where the industrial revolution had thrown together hundreds of thousands of uprooted, lonely, ill-equipped souls

who, in the resultant confusion soon lost all sense of purpose, value and direction. The Church's parochial system had been stereotyped for centuries, she was so concerned with the maintenance of the status quo, so ingrown and unspiritual, that she did not even attempt, as a Church, to fulfill her duty to these unhappy folk. The results of this neglect could conceivably have been as drastic as a similar inability to adapt was to France.

It is true that the picture of the Established Church delineated above is accurate only in that it is the sum of the impact which the Church had upon the age. There are many evidences of unsung heroes of the faith who, quietly, diligently and under great pressures laboured with effectiveness in the Master's vineyard. Because of their faithfulness to their calling, they necessarily prevented themselves from attaining position or wealth. Especially in the first thirty years of the century there were organized a number of religious societies, composed almost without exception of members of the Anglican church[18], and influenced largely by William Law's Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life. These societies, such as the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, had as their original intent the deepening of the individual member's spiritual experience, but soon branched out to provide the only missionary or evangelical emphasis of the early years of the century. Unfortunately they were so beset by regulations and restrictions handed down from the authorities of the Church that they were ill-equipped to function. The reason for the antipathy of the members of the hierarchy toward these societies can doubtless be found in the very zeal and enthusiasm which characterized the societies. It was Bishop Butler himself who is quoted

as having said, "Enthusiasm in a good man is a more alarming spectacle than vice in a bad man."[19] The official religion, though too insipid to satisfy the hungers of the English people for spiritual support, succeeded largely in fettering the societies within the Church wherein people might have found the sustenance which they, and their country, so sorely needed.

For the non-conformists, the eighteenth century was somewhat anticlimactic. Gone was the zeal with which they had pursued their cause in years past. As the legal restraints which had been imposed upon them in previous years were gradually removed, it seems as if their energies were turned from the mere business of survival to a variety of less significant pursuits. The three main non-conformist bodies differed only slightly from one another. The Presbyterians were all but indistinguishable from the Independents as to polity, while the General Baptists were divided from them on the basis of doctrine. The greatest contribution of the dissenters in the eighteenth century was in the field of higher education. Since Oxford and Cambridge were closed to all save Anglicans, it was necessary for alternative facilities to be provided, and the Dissenting Academies provided the best education available in England at that time.

The most notable event within the ranks of the Dissenters was, however, a theological division over the doctrine of the Trinity in 1718-19, the outcome of which was the increasing shift of the Presbyterians to a Unitarian position, while the Independents and the Baptists retained the orthodox Calvinist position.[20]

By and large, then, the situation in the Church in England was characterized by a spirit of apathy. The attitude toward religion

became one of indifference. Reason triumphed over faith as the fundamental precepts of Christianity became subjects for debate rather than forces and powers within the lives of men. No better words could be found to conclude this brief survey than those of Dr. Cragg, "The Hanoverian Church, despite its redeeming qualities, stood sorely in need of reform. The Age of Reason had neglected certain fundamental human needs; natural religion might satisfy the needs of some, but the hearts of the multitude were hungry."[21]

CHAPTER III

THE THEOLOGY OF THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL

It was into this era characterized by the unfounded moralism of the Deist and the hide-bound sacerdotalism of the Established Church that there was born a movement capable of bringing new light "for the evening of the world." The Evangelical Revival, which can properly be dated from John Wesley's Aldersgate Street experience on May 24th, 1738, offered bread to satisfy the hunger in the hearts of the multitude, and thereby provided the means for the regeneration and transformation of England. The effect of the Revival, led by John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, upon the next century of English history was exceedingly great, and indeed, its effect is still apparent in the world today.

The details of the history of the Evangelical Revival need not, we feel, be reiterated in this present work. But the theology of the Revival, together with its modus operandi, are germane to our present purposes, and it is to a discussion of the former that we would now turn. Before attempting to delineate this theological basis, however, it is necessary for us to deal with two popular misconceptions.

First, it must be stressed that Methodism did not create in any sense a new theological system.

> The doctrines it propounded were the great and leading principles of evangelical truth, laid down in the Scriptures and contained in the formularies of the Church of England . . . It was in spirit, rather than in substance, that it differed from the established formularies of Christianity from which it took its rise. [1]

Wesley remained to his death a loyal son of the Church of England. He believed that, rather than presenting new truths, he was merely placing appropriate emphasis upon orthodox beliefs which had, of late at least, been dormant. Maldwyn Edwards quotes from Revue des Deux Mondes, August, 1859, "Ce n'était point une question de dogme qui le préoccupait. Elévé au sein de l'église Anglicane, il en adoptait complètement, au moins à son début, toutes les doctrines."[2] It seems clear that Wesley's main concern was to be faithful to the principles of New Testament Christianity, and, in order to do so, he found it necessary to re-emphasize certain neglected aspects of the faith which had been handed down from the Apostles.

Secondly, it may seem to some who are unfamiliar with Methodism an impossible task to study the theology of Methodism, since it is commonly thought that the movement had no theological basis. A superficial reading of certain portions of Wesley's works could conceivably convey this impression, but nothing is further from the truth. Granted, Wesley often seemed to minimize all doctrinal differences. For example,

> I ask not, therefore, of him with whom I would unite in love, are you of my church, of my congregation? Do you receive the same form of church government, and allow the same church officers with me? Do you join in the same form of prayer wherein I worship God? I inquire not, do you receive the supper of the Lord in the same posture and manner that I do? nor whether, in the administration of baptism you agree with me in admitting sureties for the baptized; in the manner of administering it; or in the age of those to whom it should be administered. Nay, I ask not of you (as clear as I am in my own mind) whether you allow baptism and the Lord's supper at all. Let all these things stand by: we will talk of them, if need be, at a more convenient season; my only question is this, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" [3]

Regardless of the impression left by the foregoing lines, however, their author had very definite ideas about doctrine which he would not compro-

mise in one iota. His great concern was not in watering down all doctrinal differences to the point where all Christians could accept them. Rather he desired passionately that doctrinal differences should be emphasized, except at the point of the Christian's witness to the world. There, he believed, doctrinal differences had to be put aside, for the moment, while Christians got on with their mission to the world.

> I desire to have a league offensive and defensive with every soldier of Christ. We have not only one faith, one hope, one Lord, but are directly engaged in one warfare. We are carrying the war into the devil's own quarters, who therefore summons all his hosts to war. Come then, ye that love Him, to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. 4

Such points of doctrine as original sin; the deity of Christ; the atonement; justification by faith alone; the work of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity, Wesley felt to be sacrosanct and therefore non-negotiable. All else was, however, more a matter of opinion than of doctrine, and differences of opinion could, for the time being, be held in abeyance while the unified Church got on with its mission to the world. To say therefore that Methodism has no real theological basis is to misunderstand completely the mind and the spirit of its founder. We trust that the brief survey of the theological basis of the Evangelical Revival which follows will serve to convince the reader of this fact.

The main emphases of the theology of the Evangelical Revival are as follows:

(1) TOTAL DEPRAVITY

Not only did the founders of the movement believe in the universality of sin - that there is something in every man that is at enmity with God - but they also believed in the totality of sin. Man's nature, as a result of the Fall, is completely perverse and corrupt. Man, in

his natural state, is incapable of goodness. It is impossible for him even to perceive spiritual or moral truth. The depth of their certainty in this regard is clearly seen in a quotation from one of Wesley's sermons,

> All who deny this, call it "original sin" or by any other title, are but heathens still, in the fundamental point which differentiates Heathenism from Christianity. They may, indeed, allow that men have many vices; . . . but here is the shibboleth: Is man by nature filled with all manner of evil? Is he wholly fallen? Is his soul totally corrupted? . . . Allow this and you are so far a Christian. Deny it, and you are but an Heathen still. 5

To put the doctrine of total depravity in somewhat less dramatic terms, it is a declaration of man's complete inadequacy to stand before God. "Man, standing face to face with God has nought with which to plead."[6] Understandably, this black picture of man's estate serves to emphasize the miracle of redemption or reconciliation.

(2) UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION

It is difficult to state categorically that this was a principle of the Evangelical Revival, for this particular doctrine was the source of division between Wesley and Whitefield. Wesley upheld the Arminian position of universal redemption, while Whitefield maintained the Calvinist doctrine of election or, as it might be termed, selective redemption. Something of the extremity of their division can be gathered from the following excerpt taken from a letter written by Whitefield to John Wesley,

> For Jesus Christ's sake, consider how you dishonour God by denying election. You plainly make man's salvation depend not on God's free grace, but on man's free will. Dear, dear sir, give yourself to reading. Study the covenant of grace. Down with your carnal reasoning. Be a little child; and then instead of pawning your salvation, as you have done in a late hymn book, if the doctrine of universal redemption be not true; instead of talking of sinless perfection, as you have done in the preface to that hymn book; and instead of

> making man's salvation depend upon his own free will, as you have done in this sermon, you will compose a hymn in praise of sovereign, distinguishing love; you will caution believers against striving to work a perfection out of their own hearts, and will print another sermon the reverse of this, and entitle it, "Free Grace Indeed" - free, because not free to all; but free because God may withhold it or give it to whom and when he pleases. 7

Whitefield believed the two doctrines of total depravity and universal redemption to be mutually exclusive. Wesley was able to reconcile the two because of his belief in prevenient grace.

(3) PREVENIENT GRACE

Holding as he did the validity of the doctrine of total depravity, Wesley was compelled to admit the complete inability of natural man to move toward God or to respond in any way to Him. But at the same time he insisted that man is responsible, to a degree, before God for his own salvation, having the freedom to accept God or reject Him. This inconsistency is resolved through the belief that man is given the power to respond through prevenient grace.

> Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) preventing grace; including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first transient conviction of having sinned against Him. All these imply some tendency towards life, some degree of salvation, the beginning of deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible to God and the things of God. 8

In other words, God initiates in the lives of men the process of salvation; God provides the initial stimulus toward him, a stimulus to which we can respond or which we have the freedom to resist. If we choose to respond to the gift of prevenient grace, the way is opened for further gifts of grace to enter our lives, gifts by which justification may come. Prevenient grace is universal grace. The Calvinist faction therefore could not incorporate this doctrine in their theological

structure, and rested instead upon the doctrine of election, a doctrine which Wesley characteristically categorized as a "device of Satan".

(4) THE ATONEMENT

Someone has remarked that, for Wesley, the doctrine of the Atonement is "the burning focus of faith". Here is made clear the great cost by which the grace of God is provided for sinful men. Like all men throughout all ages, however, he was unable to present a satisfactory explanation of the "mechanism" of the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross.

> It is true that I can no more comprehend it than his Lordship Lord Huntingdon, perhaps I might say than the angels of God, than the highest created understanding. Our reason is here quickly bewildered. If we attempt to expatiate in this field, we "find no end, in wandering mazes lost".

It is through the work of Christ upon the Cross that the individual is justified. This Holy Act provides, then, the source of the grace of God through which and with which reconciliation is accomplished.

(5) ASSURANCE

Chalmers says that the doctrine of Assurance forms the unique contribution of Methodism to the life and thought of the Church.[10] And while others would claim this particular distinction for other emphases of the Evangelical Revival, it is true that Wesley's insistence upon the inner awareness of assurance of pardon and sonship is indeed significant.

Perhaps the basis for Wesley's strong advocacy of the doctrine of assurance can be found in his own experience at the Aldersgate Street meeting. Previous to that epochal event he had made a complete dedication of his life to Christ and had resolved to lead a holy life. But in that little gathering on that fateful night he received the assurance of his own personal salvation.

It is important to note that Wesley did not insist upon the sense

of assurance in his followers and consequently he did not make it, or consider it to be essential to salvation. He wrote, "That some consciousness of our being in favour with God is joined with Christian faith I cannot doubt; but it is not the essence of it. A consciousness of pardon cannot be a condition of pardon."[11]

The great value of this concept of assurance for Wesley lay in the fact that it brought a sense of freedom to the believer. It created a confidence in Christ and therefore opened the door for further gifts of grace which might lead, ultimately, to sanctification. It sealed the transformation from servant to son. Wesley, in one of his later sermons was to hold out the promise of assurance in this wise,

> Nearly fifty years ago, when the Preachers, commonly called Methodists, began to preach that grand scriptural doctrine, salvation by faith, they were not sufficiently apprised of the difference between a servant and a child of God. They did not clearly understand that even one who "feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him." In consequence of this they were apt to make sad the hearts of those whom God had not made sad. For they frequently asked those who feared God, "Do you know that your sins are forgiven?" And upon their answering "No", immediately replied, "Then you are a child of the devil." No, that does not follow. It might have been said (and it is all that can be said with propriety) "Hitherto you are only a servant, you are not a child of God. You have already great reason to praise God that He has called you to His honourable service. Fear not. Continue crying unto Him, and you shall see greater things than these."[12]

Before we leave the doctrine of assurance, it is important to note that, for Wesley, assurance related only to present salvation, from which it is possible to fall, and not to salvation in eternity.

(6) <u>ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION</u>

We come now to that basic doctrine of the Evangelical Revival around which has arisen the most confusion, and against which there has been the strongest reaction. Whether or not the follower of Christ

might reach a state of perfection is, on the surface, and from our own experience, a relatively simple problem of human engineering. St. Paul recognized the fallibility of man in his words to the Roman Church, "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil which I hate is what I do."[13] It seems obvious that perfection is an unattainable goal.

But Wesley's reasoning is rather more subtle than a hasty scanning of the nature of this doctrine would indicate. He did consider the doctrine of entire sanctification to be "the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists, and for the sake of propagating this chiefly he appeared to have raised us up."[14] And he acknowledged that the doctrine of entire sanctification refers to what might best be described as "imperfect perfection". In order to resolve this paradoxical statement, he resorted to a dual definition of sin. In terms of sin in the absolute sense, as measured by the perfect law, there is no such thing as perfection. It is in terms of the sin of conscious separation from Christ that there can be perfection in believers - a perfection of unbroken conscious dependence upon Christ. Christian perfection, then, describes a relationship, not to the moral law but to Christ.

To believe that one has reached such a state of perfection is obviously to open oneself to a variety of insidious temptations. One can imagine the complacency and the self-righteousness that might invade one's life. But to think thus is to misunderstand the emphasis which Wesley and the Methodists were trying to make. While Christian perfection is not the equivalent of sinless perfection, we must realize that what Wesley was trying to say is simply that a half-hearted Christian is no Christian at all. Every part of life must of necessity be a sacrifice either to God or to self.Yielding up to God, spiritual surrender, is holiness. It

is to love God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength and to love your neighbor as yourself.

Wesley believed that this doctrine was the secret of the renewal that God was bringing about through his societies. Writing in his Journal about the preaching of this doctrine he said, "Wherever this is not done, the believers grow cold and dead. Nor can this be prevented but by keeping up in them an hourly expectation of being perfected in love."[15]

The validity of his conviction is, we feel, substantiated through the observation that an unbroken, moment-by-moment relationship with Christ could not help but make the believer aware of the necessity of the transformation of his total existence. That such a transformation did occur, in individuals as well as in English society, is amply documented.

(7) ESCHATOLOGY

Throughout the whole thinking of the Revival ran a current of expectation, a belief that, through the offices of His faithful servants, God would create a Christian world, a world without strife, injustice or war, where men would be ruled by the love of God and the love of all mankind. But as well as the expectation of future glory there was the conviction of the reality of eternal life in the present - albeit but a foretaste of what was to come. The Christian life was a pilgrim life, a time of decision and preparation for the life that was to come; a life conditioned in every respect by the goal of eternity; but a life where a quality of eternal life might be realized in the present by the faithful follower. Something of the way in which this eschatology conditioned the life of the believer is indicated in Wesley's sermon on the topic,

What is Man?

> Remember! You were born for nothing else. You live for nothing else. Your life is continued to you upon earth, for no other purpose than this, that you may know, love and serve God on earth and enjoy Him to all eternity. Consider! You were not created to please your senses, to gratify your imagination, to gain money or the praise of men; to seek happiness in any created good; in anything under the sun. All this is "walking in a vain shadow", it is leading a restless, miserable life, in order to a miserable eternity. On the contrary you were created for this, and for no other purpose - by seeking and finding happiness in God on earth to secure the glory of God in heaven. Therefore, let your heart continually say, "This one thing I do" - having one thing in view, remembering why I was born and why I am continuing in life - "I press on to the mark". I aim at the one end of my being, God: even at God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. "He shall be my God for ever and ever, and my guide even unto death." 16

In the words of Colin Williams, "Luther gave men an eschatology of faith; Wesley gave men an eschatology of love."[17]

In summary then, we have attempted to show that rather than propounding new doctrines, the leaders of the Evangelical Revival concerned themselves with the emphasis of neglected doctrines. They differed on several points of doctrine, but these differences were of the head and not of the heart. They were able to reconcile their differences in the interest of the larger mission of the Church to the society of their time.

The emphases which they made were of great importance for their age. They stressed the love of God and the riches of His grace. They showed forth that love by the totality of their commitment to Him. Wesley himself summarized the teachings of Methodism in these words,

> God loves you . . . love and obey Him. Christ died for you, therefore die to sin. Christ is risen, therefore rise in the image of God. Christ liveth forevermore, therefore live to God, till you live with Him in glory. So we preached and so you believed. This is the scriptural way, the Methodist way, the true way. God grant that we may never turn from it, to the right hand or to the left. 18

CHAPTER IV

THE ORDER AND METHODS OF THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL

Even so fleeting an examination of the theology of the Evangelical Revival as has been made in the preceding chapter would indicate to the most casual observer that the impact of the Revival upon eighteenth century England can be accounted for only in part by the theological emphases which were made. Indeed it is safe to say that had the genius of the Evangelical Revival consisted merely of a restatement of the "good news" handed down from the Apostles, its impact would have been negligible. The theological differences among the leaders of the Revival were such as to cast considerable doubt upon the uniqueness of their presentation of eternal truth.

Rather we are convinced that the peculiar contribution of the leaders of the Evangelical Revival lies in the application to daily living, and to the life of the "gathered community" of the basic principles of New Testament Christianity. Stemming from the theological suppositions there flowed a system and order and application, and in the *modus operandi* of the Revival lies, we believe, the uniqueness of the Methodist contribution. To a discussion of the order and methods of the Revival we now turn.

We begin with an examination of the "terms of reference" of the Revival. The gospel was held to be for all men. The individual was important to God and God was vitally interested in every single man. This was no campaign to reawaken the long sleeping members of the Establishment

only; this was an all-out effort to reach out to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" - whatever their class or station, and bring them again into the shepherd's fold. We have seen earlier that the Church of the eighteenth century was characterized by an almost total disregard for the numberless ill-equipped, uprooted and exploited victims of the Industrial Revolution then in progress. The Wesleys and their colleagues, passionately committed to the idea of the worth of every individual in the sight of God, concerned themselves with reaching out to these unhappy, forgotten souls in the name of Christ.

Mohammed said to the mountain, "Come here". And when the mountain did not obey his command, he changed his tactics and went to the mountain. Since the multitudes would not come to surround the pulpits of England, the evangelists took their pulpits out to the places where the miners and the mill-hands congregated. Wesley himself did not initiate the practice of "field preaching". Indeed, when the idea was first broached to him by Whitefield he was openly skeptical not only of its propriety but of its worth. But when the doors of the parish churches were closed against him he was reluctantly constrained to attempt it[1], with such results that in his later years he was to state that, however flourishing a society might be within doors, it was bound to wither if it gave up field preaching.[2]

Harding, in his book <u>The Social Impact of the Evangelical Revival</u> states that "Methodism attracted the humbler classes in the main, while the attitude of Wesley towards wealth, ease and luxury rather discouraged the wealthy adherents."[3] But it was the humbler class that had been neglected; it was the humbler class that had been so ruthlessly exploited; it was the humbler class that was in a turmoil

of unrest and misery. Jesus said, "I am come to call, not the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." While it is obvious that the humbler classes held no monopoly on sin, it is equally obvious that for too long the essence of Christianity had been identified with upper-class respectable righteousness. The Revival changed all that, and the evangelists, like the Master whom they sought to follow, suffered humiliation and condemnation as a result.

Perhaps for the first time in their entire lives, the humble labourers and artisans were enabled to believe in themselves and to view themselves as objects of respect and worth. For the first time they were confronted with the vision of a God who cared for <u>them</u>. And because this class so exceeded the Establishment, in numbers if not in influence, the impact of the Revival began gradually to be felt throughout the whole of England.

It is interesting to attempt an analysis of the nature of the preaching which so gripped the hungry multitudes. Whitefield apparently was a flamboyant pulpiteer, able by inflection and gesture to hold vast audiences in his spell. We are told, for instance that between May and July of 1750 Whitefield, while on tour, preached ninety times to audiences which totalled in excess of 240,000 people.[4] Some of his contemporaries were impressed more with the manner of the preacher than with the content of his message. It was Johnson who said, "His popularity, sir, is chiefly owing to the peculiarity of his manner. He would be followed by crowds were he to wear a night-cap in the pulpit or were he to preach from a tree."[5] Monsignor Knox, somewhat less than charitably, remarks, "I think Whitefield was one of those men who possessed genius unalloyed with any vestige of good taste."[6]

As for Wesley, the enormous appeal which he had for his listeners must have consisted in something which is not conveyed in the printed word. For the modern reader it is inconceivable that he could have held the attention of a group of theologians, much less the attention of a multitude to whom the gospel was a stranger. "The appeal of his preaching was to the head rather than to the heart."[7]

The technique which was used by all of the evangelists has been summarized by Nicolson as follows,

> First the hearer was convinced of his utter sinfulness. Then he was persuaded of the necessity of abandoning all pride. The feelings of remorse, guilt, unworthiness and repentance thus engendered created a tension that was almost intolerable. Then suddenly came the realization that Christ had, in his person atoned for all human sins. [8]

There were, undoubtedly, many factors which contributed to the unusual appeal which the evangelists held for the crowds who thronged to hear them. Their mastery of technique; the novelty of their approach - here were educated gentlemen throwing themselves on the mercy of ignorant and impudent mobs in places where the aristocracy had never before deigned to set foot; the relentless logic of Wesley and the crowd-holding oratory of Whitefield - these account in part for their appeal. But it is safe to state that most of the interest and commitment which followed in the wake of the evangelists was the result, not of technique, or novelty, or skill, but of the communication of a passionate conviction that burned in the hearts of the preachers; their zeal to proclaim the illimitable riches of Christ Jesus.

Those who responded to the challenge of the gospel as presented to them by the evangelists soon discovered that they had grasped, not a cold and sterile system of doctrine and practice, but a living relationship with their Father in heaven. <u>They experienced</u> the presence and

power of God at work in their lives. Knox tells us "that you did not base your hopes on this or that doctrinal calculation . . . you knew!"[9] Williams, however, stresses that though great importance was placed upon personal experience of a relationship to God, this was not a paramount emphasis. He says,

> There can be no doubt that Wesley placed great stress upon experience and was concerned lest the acceptance of the authority of Scripture and tradition should lead to a formal religion that short-circuited the living relationship with God to which they bear witness . . . [But at the same time he] feared any reliance upon experience which left the question of truth to the vagaries of individual or collective feeling. He knew the danger of the Christian faith being torn from its historical moorings by being subjected to the vagaries and limitations of human experience. 10

At any rate, something of the conviction of salvation from sin, and something of the intensely personal character of this salvation was communicated by "the people called Methodists" to their hearers, and many found themselves enveloped within a new and saving relationship.

As a corollary to the emphasis placed upon experience, a number of phenomena, including glossolalia and paroxysms are to be noted. As the preacher let loose the thunderbolts of hell, persons would fall down in a stupour, or be seized with violent tremblings, or would cry out, in Wesley's words, "as if they were being put to the sword."[11] These symptoms were most often produced in response to deliberate prayer techniques, indeed the same techniques which are associated with these supposed manifestations of the Spirit in our modern days. But is is interesting to note that, though Wesley himself never seems to have shared in the enacting of these phenomena, he sympathized with those who did. Monsignor Knox remarks,

> The two brothers almost alone among the supporters of the movement kept their heads. Whole audiences might cry

> aloud . . . the preacher stood there taking notes, ready to publish an account of this curious manifestation in his Journal. Not that he was for a moment insincere; he was an experimentalist, prodigiously interested in the phenomena of conversion. [12]

Always, for Wesley, experience had to be balanced with an equal measure of the scriptures and tradition. Of a former colleague who failed to strive for this balance he says, "He was a man of uncommon understanding, and greatly devoted to God. But he was a consummate enthusiast. Not the Word of God, but his own imaginations, were the sole rule of his words and actions."[13] But that experience was vital to his message cannot be doubted. A further quotation from his Journal will serve to make this evident,

> The very thing Mr. Sinstra calls fanaticism is no other than heart religion; in other words, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. These must be <u>felt</u>, or they have no being. All therefore who condemn inward feelings in the gross, leave no place either for joy or peace or love in religion, and consequently reduce it to a dry, dead carcase. [14]

But what happened to the convert after the evangelist had, by the power of the Holy Spirit, awakened him and brought him into this new and vital relationship? Were the fires which had been kindled allowed to cool? Not at all. For immediately the new-born Christian was brought into another type of relationship, this time with his fellows, which was planned to nurture him in his new-found faith. These societies into which the convert moved were subdivided into classes, of which there were four types; for married men, married women, single men and single women. Each class numbered about twelve, and the members met regularly to confess their sins and to share their religious experiences with one another.[15] Within such an intimate group could be shared one's deepest concerns, and each member exercised what might be described as a mutual priesthood toward the other members. This concept of <u>ecclesiolae in</u>

ecclesia, small voluntary groups of believers living in constant touch with the Word of God, and seeking, within the context of a life of discipline to act as leaven for the life of the larger body has great significance for the Methodist movement. Wesley himself felt it to be essential. He writes,

> I was more convinced than ever before that the preaching like an apostle, without joining together those that are awakened and training them up in the ways of God, is only begetting children for the murderer. How much preaching there has been these twenty years all over Pembrokeshire! But no regular societies; no discipline; no order of connexion, and the consequence is that nine out of ten of the once-awakened are now faster asleep than ever. 16

In addition to providing the convert with an environment in which his faith might be nurtured, the societies had another important effect. Within them lay leadership was developed to a significant degree. Each of the classes met under the guidance of a lay leader and many of these laymen, as they gained experience and confidence, were enlisted as lay preachers who greatly advanced the work.

In order to become a member of a Society, all that was required was a desire for salvation. There was no need, at the time of entrance, for the individual to understand doctrine, although much importance was laid upon the learning of doctrine once the convert had joined. And a condition of entrance was the willingness of the newcomer to accept a life of discipline. Members were required to attend class meetings and early morning preaching services regularly. They were required to practice a high standard of stewardship, not just of possessions, but of all of life. They were to adhere to definite moral standards and to forswear luxury. Williams summarized the conditions of membership in a Society thus: (1) "doing no harm"; as examples of this Wesley spoke of the need to abstain from swearing, drunkenness, smuggling, extravagant dress, needless

diversions, self-indulgence and miserliness; (2) "doing good"; such as caring for men's physical needs, especially the poor, the sick and the distressed; caring for men's souls by instruction, exhortation and reproof, with particular responsibility for those of the household of faith; and (3) "attending upon the ordinances of God", which included, in addition to presence at class meeting and preaching services, regular attendance at Sunday worship in the Established Church, and participation in the sacraments.[17]

Not only were these high standards enjoined upon the members of the societies; they were enforced, and time after time Wesley's Journal records instances of the roll being "purged" of backsliders. The enforcement of discipline at times seems unduly harsh to modern observers. Monsignor Knox is led to remark, "It is indeed doubtful whether, in the early Methodist societies there was not too much emphasis on what Wesley called, 'watching over one another in love' - it was easy to find a harsher name for it."[18]

One astonishing facet of the enforcement of discipline is that Wesley himself seems to have been concerned with the state of each of 70,000 individual souls. How he ever became convinced that a task of such magnitude could be accomplished even by a person with his great gifts and powers is a subject that might prove most entertaining!

But we are left with the fact that the societies and the classes were of paramount importance to the growth of the movement. Because of their influence the conversion experience of the individual was not permitted to die away, but was fed with new fuel. And the convert, thus empowered, was lifted into new experiences and enabled to find new fields of service. Cragg remarks, "Wherever discipline was enforced,

numbers rose and spiritual vitality increased."[19]

But the working of the societies was only the grass-roots expression of an intricate and efficient organizational network established under the guiding hand of John Wesley. Something of the precision and discipline which he applied to these groupings of the membership-at-large was carried over into every level of the Methodist organization. It is important to note that at no time did Wesley intend to set up an ecclesiastical structure separate from the Established Church, but rather a spiritual movement within the Established Church. "He had a perfect horror of the sin of schism."[20] But throughout his course can be traced a developing despair of forestalling the inevitable break.

He had no patience with outward form or ceremonial. Chalmers states that "expediency and practical efficiency were the supreme tests of ecclesiastical forms. If anything that was traditional in the church worked effectively and made for the salvation of souls, well and good; if it did not, he was prepared to let it go."[21]

He rejected apostolic succession as a fable, and while he regarded episcopal ordination as New Testamental, he did not consider it to be ordered by the Holy Spirit. This led him when confronted with the desperate need of the North American church for clergy, to the extreme action of ordaining presbyterially.

Though Wesley developed a great organization, it can hardly be said that he was a great organizer. It is evident that he could not delegate authority. He assumed the role of a benevolent dictator, "repeatedly declaring that he would gladly be relieved of the burden of leading the Society if the right successor could be found, but in actual fact he went

his own way, brooking no opposition and showing no disposition to delegate his powers."[22]

And so the uncompromising discipline which was evidenced in the societies was carried over into the life of the whole movement, at every level, including that of the leaders themselves. Here was a stern, unbending system, but a system that worked. Here was painstaking application of the message of the Gospel to every sort of human condition, from the way one dressed to the way a nation's economy was ordered. Here was love, but love tempered with judgement. Here was faith, but faith on fire with zeal. Here was hope, but hope tempered with realism and relevancy. In short, here was "pragmatic Christianity."[23]

None of the facets of "pragmatic Christianity" could be ignored for to do so would imperil the entire system, a system which is best portrayed in words attributed to Wesley by Hildebrandt, in answer to a question as to how to keep Methodism alive after his death:

> Preach our doctrine, inculcate experience, urge practice, enforce discipline. If you preach doctrine only, the people will be antinomians; if you preach experience only, the people will become enthusiasts; if you preach practice only, they will become pharisees, and if you do not enforce discipline, Methodism will be like a highly cultivated garden without a fence, exposed to the ravages of the wild boars of the forest. [24]

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We have seen something of the intellectual and moral lassitude which infected the England of the eighteenth century; the spirit of rationalism which led to compromise and complacency, the degeneration of ethical standards in every area of a nation's life, the depersonalization of an Industrial Revolution. We have examined a Church which was incapable of inspiring its members to meet the challenge of the age;

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a Church characterized by a stale clericalism, an absence of a sense of mission, and a completely irrelevant message.

And we have seen a tiny group of men and women, undoubtedly under the guidance of the Spirit of God, who, by the fervency of their purpose, the efficiency of their method and the universal appeal of their message, were able to lead their nation out of the morass of its decay into a new and brighter age. Here, at last, was a "light for the evening of the world". As Nicolson says,

> Methodism was one of the major influences in the triumph of emotion. The importance it gave to personal experience as opposed to theological learning; its encouragement of self-expression - even of "enthusiasm"; the stimulus it gave to creative excitement and to the "renascence of wonder"; the lyrical appeal of Charles Wesley's hymns - all these enhanced the importance of personality and gave to individual feeling a significance and scope that until then had been suppressed by logic and reason. 25

What might we, in the Canadian church in the twentieth century, whose time and circumstance in so many ways so closely parallels the time and circumstance of the revivalists, learn from those upon whose shoulders we stand? It is to a consideration of this question that we now turn our thoughts.

PART TWO

THE DYNAMIC RE-INTERPRETED AND RE-APPLIED TO THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

CHAPTER V

A SURVEY OF THE CANADIAN SCENE IN THE DECADE OF THE SIXTIES

And so we turn to Canada, the colossus of the North, bestriding the globe from the Straits of Juan de Fuca to Cape Race, from Ellesmere Island to Point Pelee - described in the words of Dean Northrup Frye of Victoria University as a country, "divided by great stretches of wilderness, so that its frontier is a circumference rather than a boundary; a country with huge rivers and islands that most of its inhabitants have never seen; a country that has made a nation out of the stops on two of the world's longest railway lines."[1]

A superficial examination of Canada in the seventh decade of the Twentieth century would seem to disclose little similarity with the England of the eighteenth century. Instead of the great gulf which existed between the wealthy aristocracy and the humble millworkers and artisans we find a welfare society in which the middle class predominates. In place of the barbarities perpetrated on debtors, criminals, mentally ill and orphans we find far-ranging organizations dedicated to the rehabilitation and restoration of the unfortunate. In place of the "benevolent despotism" of an embryonic parliamentary system we have "government of the people, by the people, for the people."

Canada - where the gleaming towers of great cities rise out of the plains; where four-lane asphalt highways and steel rails crisscross the emptiness, reaching far into the distance toward the heart of the Precambrian shield; where sprawling suburbias burst forth in what

in what was yesterday pastureland, complete with aluminium-clad, green-chalkboarded, fluorescent-lighted, vinyl-tiled schools, startlingly modernistic churches and utilitarian shopping centres; where there is a chicken in every pot and a car in every carport.

Canada - the land of traffic jams and wide-open spaces; the land of the booming birth rate and the declining death rate; where infants are provided for by a family allowance and their elders by an old age pension; where the discoveries of medical, technical, industrial and social sciences abound; where labour is powerful and management is benevolently self-interested.

Here the scrubbed, fresh-faced, polite youngsters march off to school with a balanced diet in their tummies and in their lunch pails as well. Here a new leisure class occupies itself with new leisure activities; bowling, curling, swimming, golfing, skating, dancing, playing bridge, watching the omnipresent television, occasionally reading the best - or the worst - of literature in inexpensive dime-store editions. Here a multiplicity of ersatz communities thrives; the Elks, the Knights of Pythias, the Kinsmen, the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire, the Legion, Rotary, Masons, Oddfellows - all supported by the workers of the forty-hour week or their spouses who, due to the advent of the electric can-opener and the automatic washer and the quick-frozen T-V dinner also have leisure to burn.

This is the land of opportunity, "tomorrow's giant", as Bruce Hutchinson called it; the bread basket of the Western world, the world's primary source of nickel, zinc and uranium; a major supplier of forest products and petrochemicals, with cheap and abundant hydroelectric power and natural gas. A great land, a rich land, a proud land.

One would perhaps gather from the foregoing turgid prose that the Millenium had arrived, or else that the Canadian Chamber of Commerce had succeeded completely in brainwashing the writer. But such is not the case. For a more intensive examination brings to light some cracks in the gleaming facade. Indeed, one is forced to conclude that while significant technological and sociological strides have been made in the intervening two centuries, "our light", too, "looks like the evening of the world."

We pride ourselves on our pragmatism, our utilitarianism. As a result of the technological and sociological revolution, we hold a naive trust in man's ability to apply knowledge and to triumph over any and all obstacles. The engineer, the scientist, the doctor, the peace researcher - these are the high priests of our society. The Rev. W.G. Pollard, addressing the World Anglican Congress in Toronto in August of 1963 said,

> From suburbia to inner city, from home to office to plant, everything about a person is man-made; the air he breathes is conditioned by elaborate machinery; the light is artificial; the food he eats comes fully processed and packaged; the walls around him remind him continually of a world made by man, not God. All of the complex operations of the city, its transportation and communications networks, its increasingly automated industries, plants and business and financial institutions operate without reference to God. Everywhere, even in the mushrooming schools and universities of the scientific age, the emphasis is on this world rather than the next. The deepest concerns are expressed in terms of man rather than God. 2

In the words of Swinburne, it's a case of

> Glory to man in the highest,
> For man is the master of things. 3

We detect in the scientism of our present age a strong reflection of the eighteenth century spirit of rationalism. The same naive trust in man's ability to rise triumphant by the use of his reason is present. A

deification of knowledge is likewise the result. William H. Whyte Jr., in his book The Organization Man, remarks, "Science is not merely a tool: it is the only path to salvation in a world where the laymen have gone mad."[4] And again,

> The preamble of the believers is always the same. We are in a terrible fix and it is almost too late. We have applied science to things and only now have we begun applying it to man himself. Already we have learned some useful social techniques; we can measure personality, can spot the obstacles to good group dynamics, and predict communication response. But these are merely the beginning; if only we provide the time and money, before long we can unwrap the whole enigma with a unified science of man. [5]

Whyte further ascertains two other characteristics of American society which can be found coequally in Canadian Society. First, the creation of a tension-free environment, which he dubs "belongingness", where everybody is expected to approximate the statistical norm. To quote Jean-C. Falardeau,

> The individual has been reduced, as Eric Fromm has pointed out, to the role of a consumer. He is a consumer, not only of material goods, which are offered to and imposed upon him in greater and greater quantity, from soap suds to monstrous cars, but of all that was formerly reputed to be of an essentially personal character; how to spend his leisure time, how to behave with friends, how to think, how to pray. The individual in our society is no longer an active, but a passive being . . . Social conformism has become his secular gospel of behaviour. The statistical average has been raised to the dignity of the moral norm. [6]

The second characteristic of society is embodied in the now-familiar term "togetherness", which seems to be based upon the assumption that, at every level of human endeavour, two heads, or twenty, are better than one - the group is superior to the individual. Group interaction, in every sphere from corporation law to family discipline, is superior to individual action. Both "belongingness" and "togetherness", it is clear, cannot help but denigrate the sense of individual worth.

These alarming tendencies can be attributed, at least in part, to what has been accurately termed, "The Second Industrial Revolution". Unlike the first Industrial Revolution, which was characterized by a changeover from domestic to factory production and enabled by the harnessing of steam and the use of coal and iron, the second Industrial Revolution has as its hallmarks the rise of labour, specialization, automation, mass production - all the fruits of advanced technology. But like the first, the second Industrial Revolution has resulted in urbanization and increased mobility. It is interesting to note that Edmonton, in the past decade, has doubled in size, from 165,000 to 330,000. And recently, when the question was asked of a congregation of over three hundred how many had lived all of their lives in the area of metropolitan Edmonton, only two persons held up their hands. Even allowing for shyness, or embarrassment at being found to have so provincial a background, the evidence of mobility is striking.

And, as in the case of the first Industrial Revolution, there has developed an almost universal rootlessness, an almost desperate clinging to material things, a deep and fearful dissatisfaction with one's lot.

The sweeping winds of technological change have most certainly had their effect on the standard of living. And the standard of living has become the barometer of a person's attainment. Man is judged on the basis of "the abundance of the things which he possesseth". Happiness "appears to be a blend of material well-being, success, social status, good physical and mental health".[7] The bitch goddess, success, has been substituted for moral obligation.

"Depersonalization" is the most comprehensive term with which to describe the problem of our time. The manipulation of the individual

with all the techniques of modern psychology; the regarding of a person as an object or thing to be bent, moulded, twisted, conditioned - this, as George Webber trenchantly observes, may be the "fundamental expression of sin in our time".[8] The loss of individual worth that comes from being just another cog in a vast industrial complex, or a number on a pay stub, or a coding on a credit card, or one of 80,000,000 people summed up in the stark word "overkill", or a series of holes in an IBM personnel card - this is the problem which confronts Mr. John Canuck, Average Man.

Small wonder that in such great numbers he turns to the group, or to a crutch, to find solace. As Falardeau points out, "The dominating trend on our continent toward automation and conformism means that our lives are being taken away from us. We are becoming fossils in a land of plenty that is also a moral vacuum."[9]

This process of depersonalization encourages a break-down of morality, on a corporate as well as on an individual level. Evidence of graft and corruption within the political system piles up just before every election, to be greeted by the voter with a shrug. In the words of former Commissioner McLellan of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, "We seem to have lost our capacity for indignation."[10] The almost universal practice of "kick-backs" in the construction industry, "goon-squad" activities perpetrated by unsavoury labour lords, questionable business ethics - these elicit from the average Canadian a bored "Who cares?". The rising divorce rate points to the increasing acceptance of "serial monogamy" as the standard morality of our time and thus, even within the home the process of depersonalization takes its toll.

But the gleaming facade has other cracks. True, the welfare society has evened out the humps and hollows between the "haves" and

the "have nots" to a considerable extent. This, however, is no ground for complacency. For, in Sir George Macleod's arresting phrase, we have simply "exported our proletariat".[11] We have merely begun to set our own house in order. The neighborhood which is the world is in far more serious straits than were the industrial boroughs of England prior to the Revival. Reflect for a moment on the fact that a baby girl born today in Canada has a life expectancy of sixty-nine years while a baby girl born today in India has a life expectancy of twenty-seven years. Reflect for a moment on the fact that, this very moment, one hundred thousand people in the city of Calcutta alone are sleeping in the streets because they have no dwelling place in which to lay their heads. Reflect for a moment on the fact that the average income per year for a native of Mali is something less than fifty Canadian dollars.

To compound the tragedy, we do not seem to care very deeply about the rest of the world. In 1961 Canada gave, through the Colombo Plan and the agencies of the United Nations the sum of $64,720,000, which, on the basis of a Gross National Product of $36,844,000,000, works out to .0016 of the Gross National Product.[12] Nor are we prepared to welcome immigrants from overcrowded or underdeveloped nations within our borders. In 1961, immigration declined to 71,689, of which number only 1108 immigrants were from Asia and Africa.[13]

And we must admit that we have not even succeeded in exporting our proletariat. One has only to look at the shameful conditions of our Indian reservations and Eskimo villages to grasp the truth that our own house is far from being in order.

Yes, the cracks in the facade are there to be seen by any but the most casual observer. And Canadians, we believe, are becoming more

aware of the tension between what they are, and what they ought to be. This is evidenced in the insurgent nationalism, or might we say bi-nationalism that is sweeping the land, and in the expressed desire for a distinctive "Canadian" culture. It is evidenced in the phenomenal expression of "religiosity" that fills our churches and synagogues seven days a week, but which, as we shall see, is largely failing to provide an answer.

Canada, in the seventh decade of the twentieth century, has much in common with the England of Wesley and Whitefield. The veneer of civilization is a little thicker, but when the veneer is scratched the same old bogeys of fear and insecurity and meaninglessness and purposelessness are all too evident.

There is one major difference, however. For over us today, as over all mankind there hangs the Damoclean sword of The Bomb. The Great Question Mark has become a part of our lives. We have had to adjust to living with terror. For England revival was important. For Canada, as for all mankind, revival is a necessity.

CHAPTER VI

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA IN THE DECADE OF THE SIXTIES

Unlike the churches of eighteenth century England, the churches of Canada in the twentieth century are aware, to a considerable degree, of the problems with which they are confronted. Creeping secularism, depersonalization, charges of irrelevancy - these elicit firm and concerned responses from the spokesmen of the churches. On every side, prophets raise their voices; convinced, concerned individuals, often at great personal cost, attempt, with boldness and insight, to fit the churches to meet the challenge of the hour.

They are met, in their affirmations, with a vast apathy within, and more especially without, the churches. An inertia sufficient to dampen the ardour of the most passionate critic of the church pervades the whole. Canadians are largely content to remain nominal Christians in a nominally Christian land and to continue to regard the Church as an elegant anachronism.

The churches of Canada have precious little to say to the nation. And this is certainly true of the United Church of Canada. It would be correct, we believe, to describe the United Church of Canada as a typically Canadian church. Her roots are intertwined with the stuff of the Canadian culture; one in five Canadians pays her lip service; the spirit which underlay her genesis thirty-nine years ago is a relection of the practical, no-nonsense characteristics generally attributed to the Canadian people. Her members have made distinguished contributions to

government, education, social progress, science and the arts. Her leaders are noted, or should we say notorious, for their expressions of concern on social matters. Indeed, there are few areas of human crisis or concern that have escaped the penetrating scrutiny of the leaders of the United Church of Canada. But at the council tables, in the stock exchanges, in the employment offices, the rumpus rooms and the breakfast nooks of our fair land they are paid little heed.

The United Church has shown marked growth in the years since Union. From 1926 to 1962 her membership increased from 609,729 to 1,049,901. Her income, from all sources and for all purposes increased, in the same period, from $16,968,243.00 to $57,945,393.00.[1] In the period from 1947 to 1962 some 575 churches and church halls, and 273 manses were built in Church Extension areas alone.[2]

It is generally agreed that more people are associated with the church than ever before. We find it the rule, rather than the exception, for suburban congregations to hold at least two services each Sunday in order to accommodate the throngs of people. Most church "plants" hum with activities seven days of the week. There are groups for every age range from the Cradle Roll to the Senior Citizen's Fellowship, for every type of activity from sewing to bowling.

Much of the bustle of activity is designed to deepen the life of the individual church member and the life of the congregation. A great emphasis is presently being placed upon education. Adult study classes thrive; Lay Schools of Theology have little difficulty in reaching maximum enrollments; even the long-lost mid-week service is being resurrected.

But in spite of the way in which the United Church seems to thrive, in spite of the constant stream of meetings, there is, among the

committed folk who comprise the core of the church, a widespread uneasiness and dissatisfaction. They are concerned at the lack of impact which the church has on contemporary life. They are distressed by the seeming inability of the church to communicate the gospel to the great hordes of people who remain outside the church; they recognize the tension between what the church is and what the church purports to be.

There are several indications of a deep spiritual malaise within the United Church of Canada. Unfortunately, the fact that they are all but universally recognized does not mean that quick and easy solutions are being found for the problem. Most, if not all, of the indications listed below have provided starting points for the release of preachers' accumulated frustrations.

We might commence our analysis of the situation by pointing to the materialism which has infected the church. St. Peter could say, "Silver and gold have I none";[3] the United Church cannot say the same. As of December 31, 1962, the Treasurer of the United Church of Canada held assets in excess of $24,000,000.00 in cash and investments.[4] Add to this an additional twenty-two millions in reserve and stablization funds,[5] and twenty-eight millions in the Pension Fund,[6] and you have some scope of the wealth of this portion of the Body of Christ.

This, we are sure, is actuarially sound procedure for a great organization. And in itself it points to nothing more than the fact that wise stewardship is being exercised. More distressing is the fact that finances are used, throughout the church, as the yardstick with which to measure the church's success or failure. Within the congregation, money becomes the dominant theme of conversation and effort. What congregation does not mount a full-fledged stewardship "campaign" each year? How many meetings of the United Church Women manage to avoid discussing the next

bazaar or fowl supper? But in spite of promotional literature by the wastepaper basketful, in spite of intricate and colourful procedures and techniques designed to convince the church member of his "need" to give, how very few United Church members know the meaning of sacrificial giving. Money, and the things money can buy - carpetting, pipe organs, security, split-level manses - these comprise a major, and mistaken emphasis in the life of the United Church of Canada at all levels.

Especially is this alarming tendency found among the clergy. We are an ambitious lot; we do concern ourselves overmuch with comforts and advantages. (Is this an example of the phenomenon psychologists refer to as "projection"?) Some wag once remarked that the validity of "a call from God" seemed to be determined by the fact that it was "eastward in direction and upward in salary".

While clergymen generally believe that they have made considerable financial sacrifices in order to follow their calling, the truth of the matter is that the minimum salary, plus allowances and their equivalents, surpasses that of a graduate engineer with five years experience! Certainly the standard of living which we espouse is equal to, and in many cases better than, the average standard of living within our congregations.

Materialism, then, corporate and individual, is prevalent within our communion, and bespeaks a misconception of the faith of our fathers.

Another sign of spiritual malaise might be termed a corollary to the first. We find with growing concern that the United Church is becoming a socially stratified church. Where once congregations were drawn together on the basis of propinquity,[7] congregations are now drawn together on the basis of economics and class. Part of this tendency may be

attributed to the concentration of particular economic groupings in suburban developments, but in areas where the whole range of a society is to be found, the United Church congregation seems to attract the middle class. It was a former Moderator of the church, the late Very Rev. George Dorey who commented, "I hope I am not being unfair in my judgement when I say that by and large we have failed to hold the Labour Group. It is not yet anti-church; it is indifferent. Labour here as in the older countries, tends to think of the church as irrelevant to its problems and its needs."[8] The fact that the working classes do not find religion unnecessary is evidenced by the phenomenal growth of sectarian religious organizations, which draw their strength mainly from this group. Clearly we in the United Church are not experiencing or communicating the brotherhood in Christ which binds us to all men, regardless of race or class or status.

Yet another symptom of spiritual malaise is the absence of discipline which characterizes much of our congregational life. F.H. Littell, in an article in the Christian Century, quotes an anonymous clergyman as saying words which could be applied to many a situation in the United Church.

> What is a church? It certainly isn't a club of saints. We believe it is a fellowship of those who are seeking after righteousness, and we believe that when they knock at the doors of the church then is the time to swing them open and take them in. Our major responsibility starts once they cross that threshold. Our principle, in other words, isn't exclusion, it's inclusion, and then using every bit of resources we have, both personal and material, to do the best job of Christian nurture of which we are capable.

And he then comments, "Whatever else this is, it is the stance of the established church, and the promiscuity of membership which is implied constitutes a reversal of Wesleyan principles."[9]

The winds of change, in this regard at least, are beginning to blow, however. There is a growing awareness of the place of discipline in the life of the congregation. The baptism of children, church membership, attendance at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; these are being given enhancement by the conditions which are being attached. Local sessions and individual elders are beginning to take seriously their responsibilities of oversight in the life of the congregation.

We turn now to what might be called the problem of "institutionalism". It is the Anglican clergyman, Nick Earle, in his book What's Wrong with the Church? who observes,

> The Roman emperor, Constantine, discovered that the church had become too extensive for him to eliminate by persecution, and shrewdly persuaded it to accept his protection. In doing so he firmly substituted "organization" for "community" as the prime meaning of the word "church", and made it almost inevitable that from then on organization would mold the community instead of the other way around. [10]

The result of what Dr. MacLeod terms "Constantine's baptism by hosepipe"[11] is evident throughout every level of the church's life. The institution, the organization, has become an end in itself, engrossed almost wholly in its self-perpetuation. In place of a concern for individuals, for souls, has been substituted a concern for the institution. It has been noted that while in times past a clergyman could be likened to a shepherd who knew each of his sheep by name, nowadays a more appropriate sobriquet would be that of rancher who, unable to know the names of the sheep, only knows their number. Numbers, to the institution, are all-important; to the community they do not matter.

And the result of this emphasis upon the institution is an intensification of the process of depersonalization. Modern man discovers that even in the Church of Jesus Christ he is a name on a Master File Card, a number in the stack of quarterly statements, a statistic in the

Year Book.

This dearth of a sense of community is, we believe, the key to the failure of the church to communicate the gospel to those without the church. As the Irishman put it, "You can't give what you ain't got any more than you can come back from where you ain't been." Of course, there are those people in every congregation who are bound together in what might be termed a community of negative righteousness, and there is, at every congregation's core an ecclesiola in ecclesia, whose members find that their reconcilation is to one another as well as to God through Jesus Christ, but for the vast majority the concept of community is an empty one.

And how hard we try to find substitutes for community. We create our organizations for the men, for the women, for the teenagers, for the pensioners - and then we discover that the people who are actively involved in these societies are the very ones who least need them. In very few cases do they embrace those who are of differing background or status. In most cases the same people who met for bridge on Friday night meet for Bible Study on Wednesday night. Those who do not fit the mould are subtly excluded. More often than not our organizations are caricatures of the true community where "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."[12]

There is even a danger, we would suggest, that the New Curriculum which is now being introduced into the life of the local congregations might become a substitute for the true community. The New Curriculum rightly presupposes the need for an upgrading of the whole congregation's level of religious knowledge, and rightly aims at elimin-

ating the gap between the pulpit and the pew. To the extent which the commitment of the individual in his relationship to the other members of his study group is given depth, the New Curriculum will succeed. Already its effect is being felt upon the church. But if it should lead to an equation of knowledge about God with knowledge of God, the church will be off on a tangent leading away from the experience of koinonia, community, which is of the essence of the gospel.[13]

Our primary task therefore, and one for which it is all too easy to find substitutes, is that of evangelism. It is for this purpose, first and foremost, that the church exists. No amount of activity in any other sphere is a substitute.

We contend that the United Church of Canada sidesteps the task of evangelism. We make this contention in full awareness of the excellent work that is being done in many congregations through intensive, well-coordinated programmes of visitation evangelism. For is it not true that our evangelistic efforts are directed almost in entirety towards those who are already associated with the Church? How often do we reach outside the confines of our congregational lists to the great numbers who are indifferent, or actively antagonistic? George Webber's statement, "The predicament of the church is precisely that it does not recognize that it is in a missionary situation",[14] is certainly applicable to our church as a whole. We need to be reminded that the work of evangelism is the work of the individual Christian. We need to remember with contrition the contrast between the radical gospel which is declared from our pulpits and which calls men and women to "take up their crosses and follow Christ"; and the easy gospel which we practice, the main purpose of which seems to be to enable the individual to adjust to

life as it is.[15] For is it not true that we challenge people to accept a transforming faith without giving them the opportunities to express that faith? It is Tom Allan who remarks,

> When a man has been moved to join himself again with a church after a lapse of years there must be two things at least in his mind. For one thing he is impressed by the fact that his parish church is taking the trouble to come and find him, and imagines that it must be a living and vital community to undertake such an effort. In other words, he takes us literally. And secondly, this man's return to the church is unlikely to be made out of mere conventionalism. Over and over again I have found that he is genuinely concerned to meet the demands of service which he imagines the church is going to make upon him. But what, in fact, have we to offer him, apart from Sunday services? He might sing in the choir, if he can sing. Obviously he is not at the stage of teaching a Sunday School class. If there is a men's Association or Club we might teach him to play carpet bowls, or let him listen to a discussion on politics, or look at a film of somebody's holiday in Switzerland, or sing Scots songs at the Burns supper. And beyond that? [16]

Webber says, "Instead of a clearly-outlined frontier along which the sharp foolishness of the gospel is apparent, the world seems in fact to have engulfed the church. The values of the world have become the values by which the Church lives. The Church has become acceptable and natural. The Church is a 'good thing'."[17] A recovery of the sense of the mission of the church is of paramount importance, lest the foregoing statement be our epitaph.

The first step in the solving of any problem is the recognition that there is a problem. It is indeed encouraging to us to note the awareness, within the United Church of Canada, of the problems and sins which beset the Church. It is encouraging to note the many signs of renewal within the Church that spring forth in consequence of this awareness of imperfection. For, clearly, the land in which the United Church of Canada lives and works and witnesses needs the transforming power of

the love of Christ. Clearly individuals and the world are dying for the lack of that essence of life.

We are searching for a "light" for "the evening of the world". Can such a light be found in the re-interpretation and re-application of the very truths and practices which were at the heart of the Evangelical Revival, and by which renewal England was changed? It is to such a re-interpretation and re-application that we now turn our thoughts.

CHAPTER VII

A MODERN APPLICATION OF THE THEOLOGICAL EMPHASES OF THE REVIVAL

It is our contention, then, that the light for the evening of the world may be found in a reassessment and reapplication of some of the principles of the Evangelical Revival. It is our fervent prayer that by such a re-emphasis, the Holy Spirit may speak through the *ecclesia* - the gathered community - as it did in eighteenth century England, to save not only England but the world.

To be sure, it is not enough simply to take John Wesley's words and, without reinterpretation, mouth them to a dying race. For Wesley is the child of another age, and in many cases his specific emphases and affirmations are woefully irrelevant to the age in which we live. But without doing gross injustice to the memory of the man, we contend that it is possible, having reinterpreted the basic principles which he espoused, to re-emphasize them, and to find in them renewed inspiration and devotion and purpose for the challenge which awaits us, his spiritual successors.

Like the Evangelicals, it is not necessary for us to search for "new" doctrines. The gospel which we are called to proclaim is still "the old, old story", of sin and redemption, of rejection and atonement - that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself", and "entrusting to us the ministry of reconciliation".[1] No more than it was necessary for the Evangelicals is it necessary for us to construct a new theological system, but simply to declare with renewed fire the

formularies of New Testament Christianity. For there is a striking parallel between the story of the early Church as it is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and the story of the Evangelical Revival. The Church, in each of these situations, recognized the true nature of its mission, and, without giving heed to the consequences or to the cost, embarked thereon.

Recovery of a sense of the total mission of the church is, we feel, dependent upon the very theological emphases which Wesley and his colleagues made so forcefully.

And we begin, where we must always begin, with man's sinful state. Any doctrine with the label "total depravity" would get pretty short shift from the average mid-twentieth century Canadian. Yet perhaps as never before in the long story of man's climb out of the mire is there a need for strong light to be played upon man's fallen state, man's inability to help himself.

There was a time, in the not-too-distant past, when Christians looked forward to the establishment of an Utopian state, in which human perfection would be attainable - the Kingdom of God on earth. But even a cursory reading of the events of the last half century shows the naivite of their hope. Two world wars; a world depression; the advent of the nuclear age, when man holds in his quaking hands the illimitable power of the atom - to create or to destroy; the horrors of Belsen and Buchenwald, of Sharpeville and Oxford, of Quemoy and Cuba - we need not elucidate further - these have shown the dishonesties which lurk in the labyrinth of man's unconscious, and which make the doctrine of total depravity one with meaning for our time.

Yes, it is with a re-emphasis of this fundamental fact, of the

need of man as an individual, of mankind as a whole for salvation, that we must begin. And with such a beginning as perhaps at no other place is the sharp foolishness of what we declare evident. For modern man does not wish to be reminded of his fallen state. Even while he pleads with upturned face for meaning in his meaninglessness, for hope in his hopelessness, he is all but incapable of facing what he is - a sinner.

We contend that in order for the Church forcefully to declare the doctrine of total depravity it will be necessary for her to divest herself of the cloak of puritanism which she has worn for so long. She must admit in new and dramatic ways the basic truth that sin is something far more shattering than mere refusal to adhere to certain moral precepts. She must admit before the world her own apostasy; she must recognize the enlightened self-interest of much of her moral teaching. She must be in the vanguard of those who emphasize a new morality, couched, not in oppressive self-righteousness, but based on Augustine's far-reaching dictum, "Love God and do what you like".

We do not advocate a new antinomianism. We do, however, contend that the church must face honestly her own failures and recognize, for instance, that she does not have the right to impose her moral strictures on an increasingly non-Christian society before she can hope to speak meaningfully of the doctrine of total depravity.

Only if the doctrine of total depravity is clearly delineated does the next emphasis of Wesleyan theology, universal redemption, have any meaning to modern man. For there is a widespread modern heresy of universalism that does not take into account man's alienation from God, a heresy that might be defined by an alteration of Augustine's epigram quoted above, "God loves you so do what you like". If universal redemp-

tion means, in effect, that no matter what we do, all will be well in the end, then it certainly does not need to be emphasized in our modern world. But if, on the other hand, it speaks of the overflowing, costly love of God for each one of his children, if it is a clarion call to universal discipleship so that through Christ the world may be saved, then it has deep meaning for our time.

And if it speaks, as we hold, of the redemption not only of the souls of men but of their bodies, their lives, and of the life of their society; if it speaks of a creation where "God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good"[2], then it is essential that we recover it for our time.

Today the world needs a Church that cares, a Church where compassionate love is the rule rather than the exception. Today the world needs a Church which recognizes the inestimable worth of every individual in the sight of God - in short, a missionary Church whose mission is "universal redemption".

Sir George Macleod speaks feelingly of "the dismembered Cross". He claims that for most Christians, their faith is an individual thing, a matter between themselves and God alone. The cross, for them, reaches infinitely upward and downward. For others within society there is only the horizontal dimension. Many an expressed agnostic bears upon his heart a deep and abiding concern for this fellow man, and gives himself freely to his fellows in order to show the compass of his love for them. Dr. Macleod pleads for a joining together of the two dimensions.[3] Here we have a modern echo of Wesley's outburst, "The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion".[4]

Here then is a plea for involvement in the world. Here then, we

would suggest, is a doctrine which calls for what Bonhoeffer termed "religionless Christianity"[5], a total commitment by which all of life is seen in new perspective. This new perspective leads to a giving of oneself to one's neighbor without counting the cost.

One would not think that the United Church of Canada would need to be urged to become involved in social issues, for the United Church officially has long been noted for its forceful comment in this sphere. But to what avail? It matters little to the average non-Christian searching for meaning in his life that a comprehensive sociological study of, say, working mothers, has been carried out by a group of people in far-off Toronto. What is needed, instead, is for the man in the pew and for the man in the pulpit, to reach out beyond the narrow confines of the congregation, where they are warm and secure, and to plunge into the gloom and suffering of a world gone mad, where they too are cold and insecure, for that is where they belong, and until they recognize that this is their place, the church will remain an elegant anachronism. It was William Gowland, in an address to the members of Peace River Presbytery in November of 1958 who stated that if a Christian had a union meeting and a session meeting falling on the same night there was no question as to which one he should attend. His place was at the union meeting. The assumption is, of course, that he would attempt to apply the radical nature of the gospel to the problems with which the union was confronted.

And it is Sir George Macleod who writes feelingly,

> I simply argue that the Cross be raised again at the centre of the market place as well as on the steeple of the church. I am recovering the claim that Jesus was not crucified in a cathedral between two candlesticks but on a Cross between two thieves; on the town garbage heap; at a crossroads so cosmopolitan that they had to write his title in Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek (or might we say in English and in

> Bantu and in Afrikaans); at the kind of place where cynics talk smut and thieves curse and soldiers gamble. Because that is where he died. And that is what he died about. And that is where churchmen should be and what churchmanship should be about. [6]

Surely John Wesley, were he to return to a vastly different world, would not think unkindly of such a re-application of his treasured doctrine of universal redemption.

But, as Tom Allen has noted, Christian action which does not emerge out of a personal faith is a contradiction in terms.[7] What is needed, therefore, is a re-emphasis of the doctrine of "assurance", a stressing of the experiential nature of true discipleship. How few today are the hearts that are "strangely warmed". How few are those whose faith has been transformed from that of a servant to that of a son. How few there are who sense the continuing companionship of Christ throughout their earthly days.

It is difficult to know how a recovery of experience might be brought about. Ultimately it is not something that can be inculcated from within but only from above. However, there are some things that can be done. Undoubtedly discipline plays a considerable part, and of this, mention will be made in the ensuing chapter. Undoubtedly an increase in what might be termed "personal testimony" on the part of those who have been assured of their salvation would assist others to look for and wait for that experience, provided such personal testimony was not sentimental or maudlin or contrived. One movement which we contend holds considerable promise in this regard is the whole matter of liturgical renewal. The chaotic nature of much of modern worship has the effect of making the worshipper little more than a spectator at a celestial entertainment. All efforts to increase the level of partici-

pation of the worshipper, to instill in him a sense of expectancy and wonder and beauty, to lead him to the point of response and commitment, we feel, cannot help but lead to an increasing awareness of the presence of the Spirit of Christ in all of life. But, as has already been noted, we can only create the conditions; it is the spirit that gives life.

Obviously in the light of modern psychology, the doctrine of "entire sanctification" is one which stands in deep need of re-interpretation if it is to be valid for our present time. But if it can be interpreted to mean a perfect relationship to the Word, rather than to the Law, if it can be seen to stress the totality of commitment, then it is an emphasis of which the church in the twentieth century stands in need. Here may lie an antidote to the modern heresy of "compartmentalization", whereby religion, as Webber has observed, becomes "one of the twenty-five departments in Time magazine".[8] Here may be reinforcement for the principles which we attached to the doctrine of universal redemption - that the gospel must apply to every area of life, individual and corporate, or to none. Dr. Macleod poses the question, and answers it, "Should the church confine itself to the gospel? Yes, provided that we realize the gospel has no confines."[9]

With regard to the doctrine of entire sanctification, Dr. Williams adds that

> we need to hold in constant dialectical relationship the offer of freedom from the sin of separation in our personal relationships with Christ, and the continuing sin in the lives of the perfect when judged by the perfect law. By the very gift of the unbroken, moment-by-moment relation to Christ, the believer should become increasingly aware of the need for continuing transformation of his total existence.[10]

Such is, without a doubt, a unique emphasis of Methodism, and one which the church must needs declare.

One final note on the theology of the Revival might seem to be an unnecessary one. One would not think that Wesley's essential ecumenism need be stressed in the age of ecumenism to a church which is avowedly ecumenical. But this is the age, not only of ecumenism, but also of the "ecumaniac", who has been described as a person who loves all churches but his own. And it is important to note that it was the desire of Wesley to emphasize doctrinal differences - except at the point of the Christian's witness to the world. There it was a case of "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? Then give me thy hand." By all means let us learn to love our "separated brethren". By all means let us pray for the divided body of Christ. By all means let us be reminded of the fact that the things which bind us to one another are far greater than those which drive us apart. But let us never be untrue to the unique emphases which are a part of our tradition; let unity in diversity be our watchword and our guide, until that day when we may all be one.

In summary then, these emphases, if they were valid for the age in which the leaders of the Evangelical Revival worked so mightily, are every bit as valid for the age in which we labour considerably less effectively. We too are called to show forth the love of God and the riches of his grace, "not only with our lips but in our lives." We too are called to a totality of commitment, to God in Christ through our brothers for whom Christ died. And we too are promised the assurance of his pardon and of the presence of the Holy Spirit to uphold us in all that we do in His behalf.

CHAPTER VIII

A MODERN APPLICATION OF THE METHODS OF THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL

When we turn to the methodological characteristics of the Revival in our continuing search for a light "for the evening of the world", we are pleased to discover additional emphases which seem to have promise for our time. Almost without exception these emphases are being made in some part or another of the United Church of Canada, but their application to the life of the church as a whole is relatively negligible. Once again, it is our contention that by grasping more firmly the fundamental principles of organization and technique which were developed within the burgeoning revival we may begin to look for signs of renewal in our time.

Since our forebears held the doctrine of "universal redemption" to be of paramount importance, they spared no effort, and no indignity to reach out to "the lost sheep of the House of Israel". Thus, as we have already noted, since the multitude would not come to surround the pulpits of England, the evangelists took their pulpits out to the places where the miners and the mechanics gathered.

We are aware of the torrents of abuse which were directed toward them, not only by the members of the Establishment, but by the very people towards whom they were attempting to reach. We are aware of the dangers and privations which they suffered, and over which they triumphed. And we sense, in their willingness to suffer all things for the sake of the gospel, a clue to their usefulness as instruments of the Holy Spirit.

Something of the same willingness to suffer all things for the sake of the gospel is, we believe, required of us. Just as in eighteenth century England the essence of Christianity had been identified with upper-class respectable righteousness, so in twentieth century Canada the essence of Christianity, at least within the United Church of Canada, has been identified with middle-class respectable righteousness. For those who do not fit the mould of righteous respectability there is the suggestion that perhaps they would be happier in some fellowship that would be more congenial to their tastes and class.

And if we are moved by the Holy Spirit to shatter the mould, and we believe that it is to just such a task that God is now calling us, then we may expect to be on the receiving end of some strong, and perhaps heart-rending, criticism.

Let us make abundantly clear the fact that the mould is more subtle, and more far-reaching than a mould of economic class. Perhaps the best way to clarify this would be by outlining a situation with which every minister and every congregation is all too familiar. Two families move into a community and the congregation learns that they both ought to be associated with the church. One family, they learn, is of moderate means, with an excellent record of service in their last church, they get along well together, and their children are growing up straight and strong. The other family, also of moderate means, has problems. Their credit rating is a minus quantity, their children run amok, they attend church only sporadically, and they refuse to involve themselves to any significant degree in the life of the community.

And what happens? The first family soon receives a visit from the minister, from the elder, and soon thereafter, from the envelope

secretary. The parents are invited to attend the Couples' Club, and the children are enrolled in Cubs and CGIT. Rapidly they are integrated into the life of the "fellowship of the redeemed."

And the second family? Well, they're further down the list of calls that the minister must make, and obviously the elder is going to have a hard time getting past the front door, and with their credit rating, who's going to waste a set of envelopes? And thus they are subtly excluded, or at least they are made to feel less welcome, in the "fellowship of the redeemed".

Such, we trust, is not too much a caricature of life in the local congregation. And such illustrates the nature of the mould which we are called to shatter.

For the church, in addition to being the "fellowship of the redeemed" must also begin to see herself as the "fellowship of the redeemable". She must welcome within her community the lame, the halt, and the blind. She must begin to love the unloveable and the unlovely with a costly love, recognizing that in Christ the barriers of education and class and race and sex and age and, yes, respectability, have been broken down, and that we are all brothers and sisters for whom Christ died.[1] But, we may rest assured, the shattering of the mould will not be accomplished without strain and pain and sorrow.

How do we reach out into the community to proclaim the gospel to those whose need is so great? Whitefield and the Wesleys went out into the fields and preached. Obviously, unless we are content with a congregation of polled Herefords, this technique must needs be adapted for it to be suitable in our time and circumstance. But there are many places in which men gather today, and to which we can take the gospel.

Street-corner preaching, we believe, still has its place, if only for the reason that it may show the world that the Church still cares about something other than respectability. Experiments in industrial evangelism such as those initiated by the Rev. William Gowland at Luton, England and by the Rev. Harvey G. Forster at the Church of All Nations in Welland, Ontario, have, we believe, an important role to play. And mention should be made of the efforts of such men as Ontario's "Padre of the Pubs", the Rev. Arthur Packham. Additional, and increasingly effective, use must be made of television, which, though a magnificent means of entry into millions of homes, is limited by the fact that no adequate means of involvement or response is provided.

What of the techniques of "mass evangelism"? It seems clear to us that intricate, super-charged evangelistic campaigns, in which a famous preacher is brought to an area in an effort to reach the multitude of the "great unwashed" have had their day. Only a sparse handful of the throngs that attend come from without the church. And these campaigns which generally carry implicit in their nature a false individualism are worse than an anachronism in our increasingly interdependent age.

This is not to say that "teaching evangelism" within the local congregation or a group of local congregations has had its day. Indeed, here is a most fruitful avenue to explore, "the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry".

For it is in the field of lay evangelism that we contend the hope for revival lies. The members of the clergy, whether they like it or no, are tarred with the brush of professionalism. The world expects them to be evangelists. And a convinced, consecrated layman can go places and win people that clergymen, with all their training and tech-

nique are barred from.

It is encouraging to note the emergence of the layman in a key role in the life of the United Church of Canada within the last two decades. This is a reflection of one of the basic tenets of Methodism, a recognition of what Littell has called "the frozen assets of Methodism - a committed and trained apostolate of the laity."[2] But this emergence of the layman must be further encouraged. It is not enough for him to take his rightful place within the organization of an institution. Rather he must begin to see his role outside of the institution, in the world for which Christ died. Two quotations serve to emphasize this fundamental note, the first from the controversial Bishop of Woolwich,

> I would see much more hope for the Church if it was organized not to defend the interests of religion against the inroads of the state (legitimate and necessary as this may be) but to equip Christians, by the quality and powers of its community life to enter with their "secret discipline" into all the exhilarating and dangerous strivings of our day, there to follow, and to find, the workings of God. [3]

And from an address by the Rev. Dr. Jitsue Morikawa of the American Baptist Board of Missions to the Board of Evangelism and Social Service of the United Church of Canada in February of 1960,

> The essential role of the laity is in the world, living a new style of life, hammering out on the anvil of a tough and brutal world the meaning of obedience to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. If the church is really to become the church, exist for the sake of the world and not for the sake of itself, recover its comprehensive mark as the servant to the world and its true nature as mission, then the ministry of the church must be the ministry of the laity, bearing witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ before the principalities and powers of this awesome secular world. [4]

The mission of the church, then must be a mission of the <u>laos</u>, the whole people of God, and nothing could be truer to the spirit of the leaders of the Evangelical Revival.

But this is all very well to say. It is obviously a much more difficult principle to put into practice. Where does the "committed and trained apostolate of the laity" come from? How do we begin the process of "thawing out" these frozen assets of Methodism? What do we do with the new people who come into the "fellowship of the redeemed and of the redeemable" as a result of this new emphasis on evangelism? As Tom Allen has remarked, "Christian witness begins with the individual, but also the idea of an isolated Christian is impossible and fundamentally a true lay apostolate presupposes the existence of a community in which and through which the Holy Spirit may speak."[5]

One of the key practices of the Revival was the creation of the societies which were then subdivided into classes. A recovery of this principle is, we hold, essential to the effectiveness of the church today.

The convert to Christianity is called to a new way of life, a community with Christ, in which the members are "dependent upon God's grace for their daily life, united by a unique style of fellowship unlike any that they have ever known, and sent by their commitment to God and life together on a mission to the world. It is this fact of their life together that is the news of the gospel."[6] He is called, then, to communicate a message of reconcilation between men, a message of their oneness in Christ. And, mark well, this "community" is more than a "religious community", a "worshipping community"; rather it must be an all-embracing, all-inclusive fellowship, relating to all of life.

We contend that the average congregation in the United Church of Canada is incapable of providing or fostering this sense of community which is so essential for us to recover. And the reason for this

inability is to be found simply in the size of the congregation. There can be little meaningful group interaction in a "group" of eight hundred, or thirty-two hundred members.

Not that we are ready to suggest the abandonment of the congregation as a unit of ecclesiastical organization. Rather we suggest the re-structuring of the congregation into small units, or cells, meeting separately in homes or offices or shops, providing the experience of community for their members, an experience that they may then begin to transmit to the congregation as a whole and to the world at large. The unit of division may be the elder's district, although from our limited experience we are inclined to suggest that these ecclesiolae in ecclesia must come about as a result of inspiration rather than of organization.

Strange, isn't it, that the modern emphasis in the secular world upon group development, group technique, group therapy, is in reality just an extension and an amplification of the techniques which were found to be so vital to the spiritual transformation of England in the eighteenth century. But while we may use to the full the techniques and insights that group psychology provide us, we must never lose sight of the fact that the group, or the ecclesiola, or the cell, is meant to be the enabling group, fitting the individual Christian for his work in the world. It must be for the sake of the individual that the group exists and works.

The importance of our recovery of this basic practice of Methodism is underlined with a quotation from one of Dr. Robinson's less controversial works, "On Being the Church in the World", where he writes, "I believe that the theological recovery of the idea of the 'church in the house' is one of the most important tasks of our generation. Where-

as the organization is an optional extra, of the bene esse of the parish, I believe that the cellular structure of the Church will be rediscovered as a necessity of its life."[7]

Those of us who have found new content and purpose in the gospel through the experience of community in an ecclesiola can but add a hearty "Amen" to those thoughts. And those of us who have been priviledged to minister to congregations in which the revivifying power of such groups has flowed out to infect the whole can but bend all our efforts to the re-structuring of our congregations along these lines.

For it is within the enabling group that the already-converted layman or clergyman finds his heart, not only "strangely warmed", but burning within him. It is from the enabling group that he can go out to make his witness in the world. And it is to the enabling group that he can bring back new seekers for community, confident that within the cell the problems of assimilation may be overcome.

One of the hallmarks of the Class meeting and the Society in Wesley's day was the exercise of discipline. One is tempted to think that the discipline which was enforced was largely negative, but it served to delineate the sharp frontier between the "foolishness of the gospel" and the world. Something of the same delineation must be made today, and a re-emphasis of discipline, we contend, is one means to this end.

In the words of the report of the Committee on Christian Faith to the Twentieth General Council of the United Church of Canada, "We ought always to have recognized that it is the duty of the Church to define the requirements and responsibilities of Church Membership and to apply what it defines. We must take this duty seriously today, not

in any spirit of exclusiveness, but in a spirit of obedience and service."[8] Later the report states,

> [A reason] for the fear of discipline is that it appears to contradict the gospel's emphasis upon acceptance and forgiveness. Acceptance and forgiveness are of the essence of the gospel, but they are not the same things as complacency and sloth. The church exists to serve the world and not itself, but it cannot serve the world if it has rendered itself unusable as an instrument for God's purposes. Discipline is not meant to turn the church away from the world or to erect a barrier; it is meant to make the church more effective in the service of the world and obedience to its Lord. [9]

As long as people continue to equate "being a Christian" with "being a Canadian citizen", it is necessary for the church to enforce discipline. But this must never be of a legalistic bent. It must be discipline based upon love. It must seek to make the church member, and the prospective church member, aware of the radical nature of his commitment. It must enhance, rather than restrict, the means of grace, and especially baptism and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. To summarize,

> Discipline may not be pleasant, but it is a sign of hope. It shows that the church has the grace to recognize its weakness and the will to overcome it. Discipline is also an act of faith, for it shows that the church takes seriously its obedience, and believes in the reality of God's work and the possibility of its fulfillment. Discipline is likewise a work of love, for it shows that the Church's concern for its members is more than a sleepy benevolence. [10]

One final thing seems clear from the study which we have made of the methodology of the Evangelical Revival. While Wesley had, as we have seen, "a perfect horror of the sin of schism",[11] he was concerned very little with the institution of the church as such. Ecclesiastical forms and traditions mattered little to him; expediency and practical efficiency were the tests by which he was guided. Wesley, as Monsignor

Knox observed, "was incurably an experimentalist. He must forever be taking the lid off to see how his Gospel was working."[12]

Something of the same willingness to break loose from tradition, to experiment with new techniques and practices, to escape from the stultifying atmosphere of institutionalism for its own sake, together with a recovery of the vision of the church existing for the sake of its mission and of the world must characterize the United Church of Canada if she is to be used by the Spirit of God as an instrument of revival in our time.

It must be noted, in conclusion, that no attempt has been made specifically to stress the importance of experiential confrontation as a means to revival. We hold that this emphasis is implicit in all that we have been saying. But at the same time, while, as has already been observed, we can create the conditions by the use of techniques, confrontation or experience, call it what you will, remains the work of the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately it is the Spirit that breathes life into the dry bones of theological doctrine and ecclesiastical organization. Ultimately it is the Spirit that creates in the committed Christian the spirit of zealousness and the experience of assurance of salvation. Ultimately it is the Spirit that can create revival in our time, that can show forth a light "for the evening of the world".

There is much that we can learn from the leaders of the Evangelical Revival in terms of the emphases which they made. But all that we learn will be for naught unless, like them, we place our trust, and the service of our lives, in the God who acts, the Lord of history, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

It is George Webber who remarks, "Christians are called to be and to act, not endlessly to discuss."[13] And it is Karl Barth who, in a different way, says the same thing, "Today there is rather too much said about the church than too little. There is something better - let us be the church."

Herein then is the challenge,spoken to us in terms no less demanding than it was spoken to the leaders of the Evangelical Revival, to "lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and to run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith who, for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."[14] God grant that,having done so, we may be used by Him to bring a light "for the evening of the world".

And in the words of Wesley's deathbed statement, "The best of all is, 'God is with us'."[15]

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10. Burton, Downing and Kelly - "A Little Honest Graft never hurt a Politician at the Polls" - Maclean's Magazine, Vol. 77, No. 2, January 25, 1964, p. 32

11. Macleod, Only One Way Left, p. 17

12. Canada Year Book 1962

13. Ibid.

Chapter VI

1. The United Church of Canada Yearbook, 1963, Vol. 1, p. 146 - 147

2. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 137

3. Acts 3: 6

4. Yearbook, 1963, Vol. 2, p.39

5. Ibid., p. 40

6. Ibid., p. 79

7. Boinsen, op. cit., p. 131

8. Dorey, Robertson Lectures

9. Littell, "Towards the Recovery of Discipline in Methodism", Christian Century, Vol. LXXX, No. 26, p. 826

10. Earle, What's Wrong with the Church?, p. 21

11. Macleod, op. cit., p. 50

12. Galatians 3: 28

13. It should be noted that the New Curriculum materials provide an excellent basis for study for a small group fellowship. (see p. 77 ff) In many instances, the cellular nature of the church has already been made apparent to individuals who are studying the New Curriculum.

14. Webber, op. cit., p. 29

15. Macleod, op. cit., p. 23

16. Allen, The Face of My Parish, p. 35 ff

17. Webber, op. cit., p. 48

Chapter VII

1. 2 Corinthians 5: 19

2. Genesis 1: 31

3. Macleod, op. cit., p. 37

4. Chalmers, op. cit., p. 90

5. Robinson, Honest to God, p. 35 ff

6. Macleod, op. cit., p. 38

7. Allen, op. cit., p. 61

8. Webber, op. cit., p. 33

9. Macleod, op. cit., p. 38

10. Williams, op. cit., p. 189

Chapter VIII

1. We must distinguish between this elimination of all barriers, and the "promiscuity of membership" against which we inveighed earlier (see pp 57 ff). Obviously, the church will uphold the same standards of discipline with regard to the church membership of the "unloveable and the unlovely" as it will for their more fortunate brethren.

2. Littell, op. cit., p. 827

3. Robinson, op. cit., p. 139
4. Witness to the Light, p. 19
5. Allen, op. cit., p. 62
6. Webber, op. cit., p. 43
7. Robinson, On Being the Church in the World, p. 85
8. The Doctrine and Practice of Church Membership, p. 9
9. Ibid., p. 11
10. Ibid., p. 11
11. Pigeon, op. cit., p. 69
12. Knox, op. cit., p. 429
13. Webber, op. cit., p. 42
14. Hebrews 12, 1 - 2
15. Knox, op. cit., p. 540

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